

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

by

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NOTE

The author has described the Orders as he has observed them personally and therefore with particular attention to France. For the convenience of the reader, additional information on other countries (particularly the British Isles and the United States) is given in an Appendix. The publishers' thanks are due to Mr Peter Anson who kindly contributed the material for the Appendix.

I. AN AGE OF UNBELIEF

‘**T**O think that such people exist in the twentieth century!’

The exclamation of disgust was drawn from a tourist who had caught sight of a Dominican friar in his religious habit making his way through the fortified maze of Mont St Michel.

No doubt her disapproval would have deepened had she known that the creature, not satisfied with wearing homespun and shaving the crown of his head, was linked to the ideals of the past by a triple vow of poverty, obedience and chastity—aims which are so entirely at variance with what are today regarded as the proper ends of endeavour.

‘Vows, of that kind, in our age?’

I can almost catch her scandalised complaint as it dies away under the ironical glance of the gargoyles, whilst high overhead St Michael pursues his eternal



combat, perched on the top of the spire like a silver bird planing above the carcase of some fabulous

animal which has been stranded on the beach since the dawn of time.

I do not know whether there are many ladies to whom the sight of a monk or friar in his natural surroundings is unendurable, but there can be no doubt that today we are very far from the Gothic tradition, farther still from the spirit of the mediaeval age, and that the gap which divides us is widening. We succeed in combining a great admiration for the cathedrals of the Middle Ages with the most profound ignorance of the faith which raised them. Indeed, some are tempted to think that they can be explained by a technical secret known to the architects of the thirteenth century but lost to their successors.

Ask a tourist: 'What is faith?'

He might answer: 'It is what caused cathedrals to rise, with a minimum of scaffolding, to heights undreamt of by earlier builders. Faith is the recipe for Gothic vaulting; it has fallen into disuse since the discovery of cement.'

'What is dogma?'

'Catholic dogma is a disciplinary establishment for adventurous minds, a musty prison in which, after enduring many humiliations (these include searches and the use of padlocks), the prisoner is able to recover a sense of security: the security of the convict.'

'What are articles of faith?'

'These are limits imposed on human reason by dogma which, in a voice charged with anathemas, warns: "Thou shalt go no further".'

The similes of this little atheistic catechism have their relevance if one recognises that they present a view exactly the opposite of truth.

Our condition in this world is certainly like that of a prisoner in his cell, but dogma is the window, and if the Church does anything about our prison it is for the purpose of making holes in its walls. The atheist is not the man who pierces these walls; on the contrary, he stuffs up the chinks, in the ingenuous hope that by forgetting that there is a world outside, the prisoner will also be able to forget that he is in prison.

The courage of the spirit does not consist in going beyond the bounds of dogma, but in endeavouring to reach them. No heresies have been condemned by religious authority for their boldness; they have been condemned for their timidity, for no heretic has gone beyond the implications of the Incarnation but many have not had minds sufficiently virile to accept them and have therefore remained before the image of a man whom they revered, or a god whom they adored; whereas the Church recognises and proclaims a God who became man.

Lacking an understanding of faith, we naturally fail to understand those who live by faith, and, just as we connect faith with a form of art that is dead,

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so we almost expect to find statues of monks and not men of flesh and blood living in the abbeys of our land.



Nevertheless, the Religious Orders do exist. And monks, friars and clerks-regular are not confined to the shaded cloister where the invisible light of contemplation holds their souls in attentive silence. They can be seen on the roads and in the lanes, sometimes burning a trail, sometimes the last persons to pass along that particular track.

Robed in black, white or brown, bearded or clean-shaven, shod in Franciscan sandals or the high laced shoes of the Jesuits, or dressed like clergymen, they do not seem to be put out by the century of Einstein. Like you and me, they travel by the aid of turbine or jet. With hood and scapular flying in the wind, they cross oceans by plane in the process of weaving the solid web of monasteries, schools, hospitals and institutions, religious and social, whose fabric helps to make the Catholic and Apostolic Church the greatest spiritual power of all ages. If a thread is broken it is invariably mended, whether after a day or after a century.

From the Augustinian Recollects to Missionaries

of the Holy Family the mere classification of the Orders and Congregations fills several pages in the *Annuario Pontificio*—the official 'year book' of the Catholic Church—and it is rumoured that the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, who administers the affairs of the three hundred thousand monks and the eight hundred thousand nuns of the Christian world in communion with the Holy See, is the only person who knows the names of all the Orders, and certainly one of the few persons who could tell you the correct habit of an Antonian of Saint-Hormisdas.

A curious fact, which would no doubt be most disconcerting to the aggrieved tourist, is that if one examines the rolls of the reverend Secretary, one is obliged to recognise that the number of those adopting the Religious State has not diminished since the Middle Ages; indeed the figure has not varied widely, as though by some mysterious decree the amount of salt which the world needs had been fixed once and for all. The graph of intake is slightly irregular, but it shows no sign of a persistent fall. The rhythm of the various foundations remains steady, unaffected by revolutions and wars. But, just as an epidemic gives rise to a quickening of self-sacrifice, so some law of justice seems to balance a collapse of ethics and ideals by an increase in vocations, and while conquerors, politicians and prophets of a new social order believe themselves

capable of changing the balance of power and of inflecting the course of history, an invisible factor gently re-establishes the equipoise without their knowledge.

We are no longer in the atmosphere of the religious fervour of the Middle Ages, but, if the decline of the Orders had followed the normal pattern of outmoded institutions, monks and other religious would have died out long ago.

The impetus of the Reformation and the Renaissance would have broken the heart of the monastic movement, the French Revolution would have had no 'superstitions' to fight save those of its own breed, and Napoleon would have had no need to tell us that he was hostile to the return of the Orders to France, 'monastic humility being destructive of all strength and energy, and of the capacity to govern'. If the monkish ideal had died out, then the spirit of the nineteenth century, under the banners of scientific materialism and progress, would have reigned over all minds.

But nothing of the kind happened. Between 1850 and 1900 no less than seventeen new Orders or Congregations were founded, amongst these, the African Missionaries, the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament, the Salesians of St John Bosco, the White Fathers, the Priests of the Sacred Heart, to mention only a few.

So we can see that the golden age of scientific

materialism was also a period of religious revival, but it was a revival which remained unnoticed by the general public.

In the same way, in our arrogant twentieth century, our age of speed, television, radar, and thinking machines—which might seem to have extinguished all possibility of contemplation and of interior life—our atomic age sees (or rather, *might see*, for events pass so quickly before its eyes that it has no time to take them in) a revival of mediaeval monasticism developing in just those countries which are most deeply involved in technical progress. For example, at only a short distance from the great urban centres of the United States, the Reformed Cistercians, contemplatives of pure Roman antecedents, are multiplying in an astonishing manner despite the materialistic pressure of the environment.

And still ambitious people will go on imagining that they can direct history. At best they can only direct a small part of it.



‘Stop! That’s enough!’ I can hear the reader cry. ‘It seems that, though I have not noticed it, all the world is hurrying into monasteries.’

Believe me, I am not suggesting that we are living in a time of faith comparable to the age of, say, St Bernard, and even then, allow me to suggest, the number of those 'called' gives no certain information as to the number of those 'chosen', so that we cannot be certain that there were more saintly people in times of religious plethora than in times of religious famine. The point I want to make is that this century, like others, bears witness to the fact that through all the vicissitudes of the spirit of religion each generation continues to supply its quota of apostles, hermits and missionaries. It is easy to reject them, not to know anything about their vocation, their life, or their message. But despite this they *do* exist, they do not belong to the twelfth century, but to our own world, and while many of us relegate the monastic ideal to a past age and are inclined to place the truths of faith on the bookshelves which hold the fables of the Middle Ages, simultaneously, and every day, healthy intelligent young men knock on the doors of the houses of prayer and ask to wear that habit which was such a cause of scandal to the tourist at Mont St Michel.

For there are men alive today who are not exclusively absorbed in the mechanics of industry or the mechanics of social life or the mechanics of sex, men who feel the weight of their eternal destiny, which is also the weight of the crown which they must bear.

A journey through the religious Orders and Congregations gives rise to many of the same surprises as a voyage of discovery, and often offers a fresh view of life. It is not necessary to cross seas or travel many miles to feel that one has reached another planet; sometimes it is only needful to pass from one cloister to another. The difference between a Franciscan and a Jesuit is as great as the difference between the Martian or the Moon-dweller of science fiction and ourselves.



They differ in every way: in character, in outlook, in expression, in dress. Under whatever skies it may be built, the humble red-brick Franciscan house seems to have kept a little of the gay sun of Tuscany, while the square Jesuit building sometimes offers no more foothold to the imagination than a filing cabinet. After fifteen years of intellectual and moral training the Jesuit emerges from his school with the force of a torpedo, which will inevitably explode on the target at which it has been aimed. (And a torpedo does not choose its target.) When we leave this school of ballistics we can pass to the gentle peace of the Benedictines, or to the serene heights of Carthusian contemplation.

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In comparison with the temporal world which today bends all its strength towards the standardisation of its citizens (and whose science surveys now count human beings in lots of so many hundreds of thousands), the world of the religious seems so varied that it might be more correct to speak in terms of worlds in the plural.

It is said that character is revealed in moments of trial. Monks, friars and clerks are men who voluntarily accept the great trials of silence, fasting, solitude, and if necessary martyrdom: the richness and diversity revealed by these heroic tests is beyond the scope of any inventory.

AN AGE OF UNBELIEF



II. THE RELIGIOUS STATE

IF it were not too flippant a simile, one might liken the Church to a republic presided over by the Pope and administered by the secular clergy; in which case one could compare the various religious Orders and Congregations to the different institutions of the State, some representing the body of the teachers, some the legislature, etc. The Jesuits, for instance, would constitute the army, the Dominicans the university staff, while the contemplative Orders could be likened to the great issuing houses and financial establishments which are concerned with the granting of credit.

The analogy is certainly far-fetched. In any case the simile needs to be spiritualised. The Cistercians and the Carthusians can be said to be like bankers only to the extent that these, without exercising any material, commercial or industrial activity (nothing is physically produced by a bank), nevertheless exercise considerable power over all social organisations, for the contemplative Orders play a big rôle in the spiritual economy of the Church without participating in its visible activities. Prayer and the rhythm of the spiritual life are in their case the equivalent of the banker's money.

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If the Society of Jesus can be compared to an army, this is due to its exemplary discipline and to the special vow of obedience to the Pope which permits him to use them for any project which he may have in mind, in the way that a general designates an objective to his troops. They may be detailed to found a university, to set up a mission, or to play their part in an apostolic or a charitable undertaking. Fritz Hochwalder's play, *On Earth as it is in Heaven*, gives a startling example of such obedience. They are the expendable troops which the Commanding Officer can order to carry any objective and use as he thinks fit for his strategy. The Society will occupy a position or abandon it at a command from Rome, with the discipline of a good soldier who has been ordered to take up a new station.



The Jesuit army has a special rôle on account of the vow taken by its members which causes them to be at all times at the disposition of the Holy See, but all religious have a relationship to Rome, which is rather more direct than that of other Catholics, because a special dispensation withdraws most of them from the jurisdiction of 'the Ordinary', i.e. of the bishop of the diocese.

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However, even the powers of the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, who lives within the shadow of the Vatican, are not unlimited. The Orders and Congregations govern themselves according to Charters which they received from Rome, whether ten years or ten centuries ago, and which make of each body a little principality or confederate republic within the Church.

Each body has a representative at the Vatican who in some sense acts as an ambassador. But besides this diplomatic representative they supply Rome with two-thirds of the Consultants of the Sacred Congregations, and a large part of the teaching staff of the Roman colleges. In the political field the United States offers a good analogy: the individual States, each with its tradition, its customs, its laws, depending none the less on the central power in Washington, and each participating in the Government of the Union, lose nothing by this co-operation in terms of territorial jurisdiction or individual prerogative in matters of law. But for the comparison to be satisfactory, it would be necessary that the form of local government should differ in each State as greatly as it differs in each religious body.

The Benedictine régime, for instance, is said to be essentially monarchical. The Abbot is vested with all the powers of government and reigns for life over his monastery. All the abbeys of St Benedict are independent principalities, united by agreement

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Benedictine



Cistercian



Carthusian



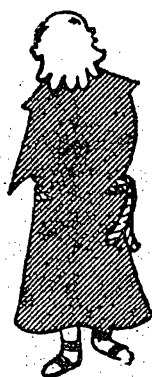
Carmelite



Dominican



Franciscans



Jesuit

under the sceptre of an honorary Abbot Primate.

The Dominicans, on the other hand, are decidedly democratic. All posts are not only accorded by election but are held on a temporary basis. Like the French, they may be said to change their government very often—that is to say, the Priors and Provincials are never in office for very long. Dominican democracy has lasted for more than seven centuries; no doubt the desire for perfection made by its electors explains this longevity.

The constitution of the Carthusians is that of an aristocratic oligarchy. Like the Benedictine Abbot, the Carthusian Prior is elected for life, but he is subject to the General Chapter, an annual and sovereign assembly of all the Priors of the Carthusian Order.

As for the Jesuits, their sense of authority is expressed by the election of three 'candidates' for the post of General of the Order, among whom the Pope makes his choice. The offices of the Order are filled at the discretion of this General.

Thus it may be seen that in the religious Orders and Congregations all the classic forms of government find their expression and continue to co-exist despite the fact that most politicians regard such co-existence as impossible; they may even be combined in the same Order. The Benedictine Abbot is elected by universal suffrage, after two ballots, but he is the prisoner of the Benedictine Constitution

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to the same extent that the British monarch is the prisoner of the British constitutional tradition. And if the Dominicans can be classed as democrats, it is probably because there is a time-limit to the exercise of the functions of government by the individual. In the religious world the principles of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy mix, overlap and rub shoulders to such an extent that it would be hard to assess the part each contributes to the remarkable equipoise of the whole edifice.

In every religious community free and secret ballots are at the basis of office. A Carthusian votes as we vote, but no candidate can be seen toasting the success of his election programme, for no one offers himself as a candidate. Instead of being heralded by six weeks of eloquence and canvassing, the Carthusian elections are preceded by three days of increased fasting and stricter silence. An election means the end of all meetings, and, so that the judgment of electors should not be obscured by gratuitous advice, all discussion is forbidden. The voter is reminded by several statutes that of two potential priors, of whom one may be more experienced in temporal affairs and the other more experienced in spiritual matters, he should choose the latter.

As may be seen, the customs of religious are more or less the opposite of our ways of behaviour.

III. THE PROBLEM OF FINANCE

SINCE each Order or Congregation has its constitution and its government it also has its Treasury. The minister responsible for the finances of the Order is usually called the Procurator. This office is not a popular one and the religious who occupies it is not envied. No one enters a religious Order for the purpose of displaying his talent for business. A Cistercian to whom such an office had been allotted first sent a postcard to all his friends asking them to pray for him, but on second thoughts, he followed it up by one begging them to pray for the Order.

A true religious accepts office with resignation, praying that the trial may be short, and regards replacement as a favour. In the Society of Jesus a regular process of degrading is part of its 'tempering' discipline. The 'officers' are periodically reduced to the ranks and not all rise again to positions of eminence.

The resources of the religious Orders and Congregations have never been very exactly assessed, though anxious tax collectors, on the look-out for cash, have at times done their best to determine them. The Benedictines are often regarded as large

landowners (collectively, of course); the stability of their institutions, in which no covetousness menaces the joint heritage, accounts for this state of affairs. The endurance of their holdings derives from the equivalent of a law of primogeniture which avoids the fracturing of properties.

The Cistercians also own land, but never more than they can cultivate themselves. A Cistercian monastery is as far as possible an economic autarchy. The Abbey of Cîteaux, for instance, produces its electricity from its own power plant. If the Cistercians did not make a point of scrupulously limiting the profits of their model farms, the continuity of their work, the frugality of their way of life and their infinite patience would result in their gaining so favourable a position in the competitive world that they would end by ruling over large areas.

The Carthusians like the Cistercians usually own some land around their monasteries, but whilst the former often settle in wild valleys, the latter in past ages chose bogs which they could drain and render fertile. Both Orders concentrate on making the land fruitful, and succeed in building up productive agricultural estates in waste land which no one else would consider worth buying.

In the case of the French Carthusians, however, an important financial resource lies in the famous green or yellow liqueur which is made in the ultra-modern distillery at Voiron, from which thousands

of bottles bearing their serene device—"The Cross remains, the world passes"—emanate every year. This motto of the Order is the symbol both of that permanence which the good Fathers know and of the insecurity which is the lot of their clients.

The financial set-up of religious Orders which are not rooted in any particular spot of land varies greatly. The Jesuits draw their revenues from certain of their schools, and the books which the Society publishes, plus donations and legacies. These, administered with that prudence and discernment which the Jesuits apply not only to theological matters, have enabled them to finance a succession of new foundations.

The Franciscans and Dominicans, classified as 'mendicant Orders' because their rules forbid them to own anything, are not often seen begging on public thoroughfares these days; but the uncertainty of their resources still to some extent justifies the title to evangelical nobility which the Middle Ages conferred upon them. They derive their income from more or less the same sources as the Jesuits, but are said to be more dependent on the generosity of their benefactors.



Excluding the mendicants, are the other Orders

and Congregations as rich as their enemies like to suggest, or as the hungry tax-gatherers would wish to prove? It is certainly rare to hear of a monastery going bankrupt; far more often one hears of one being robbed, or having its lands expropriated.

One must admit that monks bear years of want without complaint, and that their standard of living is very low. When a religious body draws up a list of grievances it is not on this account but usually because they consider that the degree of asceticism laid down by their rule is not strict enough. For instance, a delegation of contemplatives, of whom the youngest member had passed eighty, once presented themselves at the Vatican to beg the Pope to rescind the order he had given for their austerities to be mitigated in some particulars. They based their request on the fact that their great age proved that their régime, as it stood, could not be detrimental to their health. To people with such an outlook money is really of no importance.

Many Orders have at some time or another passed through a period of pomp; several of them at times became so rich as to cause scandal and rouse the anger of small people as well as the wrath of great Saints. St Bernard attacked the luxury of the Abbots of Cluny with a violence which still alarms his biographers. But it must be added that this extremely pious Saint was able to discover symptoms of

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sybaritism where you and I might only see signs of penance and renunciation.

In any case, those days are past. The period of nomination to 'benefices' is over; today Abbots levy no taxes, the religious lives as a poor man. We see no Abbots of Cluny, nor for that matter any St Bernard.

IV. SAINT BENEDICT'S TEST

THE historians tell us that the monastic tradition arose in the third century with the advent of hermits and anchorites who lived in solitude and abhorred company so much that, according to one author (he may have exaggerated?), they took refuge in caves whenever they sighted a lizard.

The age of the martyrs had ended; since the persecutions had ceased, heroism was out of a job and Christians were living comfortable lives. It was at this moment that many men of character left the cities of the Holy Roman Empire where they had enjoyed the peace of social conformity, and made their way to the deserts of the Middle East. From this vantage point, they set the world an example of recollection, silence and mortification which the religious houses carry on to this day.

This was the age of those terrific desert Fathers who seem to dominate the early days of Christianity like so many outsize statues. But no hermit ever manages to remain a solitary for long; notoriety attracts the curious, and grace draws a few kindred souls to his hide-out.

For thirty years (the historians confirm this fact) St Simon Stylites sat perched on top of his sixty-foot

column, and during all this time thousands of bumpkins filed past to observe him nibbling at his weekly ration of greens, and to gape at the record he was establishing for mid-heaven-and-earth mortification—a record which goes unchallenged to this day. Going to visit St Simon was no doubt the equivalent of driving to see the latest jet plane—a pleasant Sunday outing; and, according to the chroniclers, the crowds of those days made just the same criticisms that people make today when they see the Church deprived of the services of robust apostles in the interests of an ascetic way of life that appears useless to them. The uncomplimentary terms ‘escapists’ and ‘bolters to the desert’ were current, and finally crystallised into the pejorative noun ‘deserter’, which is still with us. Tourists, out to ‘do’ religion as they might ‘do’ Paris or Venice, have always identified the deserter who abandons the fight with the hermit who, in just the opposite spirit, rushes into battle with such enthusiasm that he finds himself alone in no-man’s-land.



But the hard life and severe discipline of the hermit did not attract curiosity and censure only; it also engendered vocations, and when the Sunday

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evening tide ebbed some flotsam was usually found lying on the sands. . . . Afterwards the huts of these spiritual go-getters sprang up like mushrooms till one day the ex-solitary woke up to the fact that, much against his wish, he had become a school-master and the leader of a community.

By the time five or six hermits had agreed to share their pittance, to recite a few prayers together, to set up a fence to protect themselves from trespassers or from wild animals, or merely as a symbol of the boundary of their spiritual kingdom, a monastery had been established in embryo; a few regulations would soon be needed, and these would develop into the Rule; some promises would be required of the members of the community and these would become the solemn vows. We have actually witnessed the passage from the eremitical life, which now survives only (and in a mitigated form) among the Carthusians and Carmelites, to the life of the cenobite, which is common to all orders.



That is how it started.

Later the Church had to intervene in order to regulate a new development in Christian life which was producing Saints, but not only Saints. For

while these desert Fathers and their disciples were engaging in new and heroic forms of asceticism, there were other anchorites of a less admirable variety who slid pleasantly enough into a lazy existence, and who, according to St Benedict, 'accepted no law but the satisfaction of their desires, and defined as holy everything which they had thought up, while condemning all the things they did not like'. It became evident that some rules needed to be imposed on fans of the cenobitic life.

Benedict of Nursia was the greatest of all monastic law-givers. He lived in the sixth century, and whilst dwelling as a hermit in the caves of Subiaco was so besieged by followers that he found himself obliged to divide them into twelve communities. The Church recognises him as the Patriarch of the monks of the West, and his Rule has remained the masterpiece of its kind.

It is comprised in seventy-three remarkably concise chapters, and is a collection of instructions both moral and practical which relate to every aspect of the religious life and seem to establish, for all time, the place of prayer, work and rest in the lives of those who have devoted themselves to the service of God. These few pages contain a summary of spiritual doctrine, a code of monastic government, and an outline of Christian principles which are so clear and so perfect that they have formed the basis of the spiritual life of most of the Orders.

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From the sixth to the thirteenth century all the monks, both of the East and of the West, were contemplatives. Indeed, it was not considered possible that the religious life should take any other form. This contemplation had nothing to do with a *dolce far niente* lulled by metaphysical dreams and sleepy Our Fathers.



In those days the opposition between Christianity and the world was so generally accepted that the decision to abandon the world for the purpose of living a Christian life seemed an obvious resolution for any really religious person to take. To 'make one's soul' in the world was thought to be not, of course, impossible, but very difficult—an opinion quite the reverse of that held today. (Our contemporary Christians are often more concerned with saving their neighbours' souls than their own, and seem willing to undertake the task by many peculiar means, sometimes at the expense of de-Christianising themselves.) However this may be, in his Rule St Benedict seems never to have thought it necessary to justify a way of life the usefulness, perfection and necessity of which were not then challenged by any of the faithful.

Today we seem sure that the Christians of the

sixth century were quite wrong, and nothing could be more fatiguing than to try to justify the contemplative life to our contemporaries. It is no use drawing people's attention to the fact, confirmed by history, that it was these cloistered and apparently static monks who converted Europe to the Christian religion, while our own activities do not seem to be preventing a wide and rapid loss of faith. For despite this evidence, people persist in believing that the contemplative Orders are the final refuge of idleness, weakness and selfishness, and they remain blind to the miracle of this static apostolate.

The world today doesn't believe that it is any more difficult to make a man a Christian than to make a Socialist of him, or a Conservative, a Democrat or a Republican, and it has no conception of the fierce combat which any Christian has to fight against himself day in and day out, if he intends to remain faithful to the spirit of Christianity. The modern world has not studied the seventy-two precepts in the fourth chapter of the Rule of St. Benedict, in which he provides those who wish to attain the Christian ideal with a handbook to this honourable career. Here they are in their stark simplicity:

1. In the first place, to love the Lord God with all one's heart, all one's soul, and all one's strength.
2. Then, one's neighbour as oneself.
3. Then, not to kill.
4. Not to commit adultery.

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5. Not to steal.
6. Not to covet.
7. Not to bear false witness.
8. To honour all men.
9. Not to do to another what one would not have done to oneself.
10. To deny oneself, in order to follow Christ.
11. To chastise the body.
12. Not to seek after delicate living.
13. To love fasting.
14. To relieve the poor.
15. To clothe the naked.
16. To visit the sick.
17. To bury the dead.
18. To help in affliction.
19. To console the sorrowing.
20. To keep aloof from worldly actions.
21. To prefer nothing to the love of Christ.
22. Not to give way to anger.
23. Not to harbour a desire of revenge.
24. Not to foster guile in one's heart.
25. Not to make a feigned peace.
26. Not to forsake charity.
27. Not to swear, lest perchance one forswear oneself.
28. To utter truth from heart and mouth.
29. Not to render evil for evil.
30. To do no wrong to any one, yea, to bear patiently wrong done to oneself.

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31. To love one's enemies.
32. Not to render cursing for cursing, but rather blessing.
33. To bear persecution for justice's sake.
34. Not to be proud.
35. Not given to wine.
36. Not a glutton.
37. Not drowsy.
38. Not slothful.
39. Not a murmurer.
40. Not a detractor.
41. To put one's hope in God.
42. To attribute any good that one sees in oneself to God, and not to oneself.
43. But to recognise and always impute to oneself the evil that one doth.
44. To fear the Day of Judgment.
45. To be in dread of hell.
46. To desire with all spiritual longing everlasting life.
47. To keep death daily before one's eyes.
48. To keep guard at all times over the actions of one's life.
49. To know for certain that God sees one everywhere.
50. To dash down at the feet of Christ one's evil thoughts, the instant that they come into the heart.
51. And to lay them open to one's spiritual father.

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52. To keep one's mouth from evil and wicked words.
53. Not to love much speaking.
54. Not to speak vain words or such as move to laughter.
55. Not to love much or excessive laughter.
56. To listen willingly to holy reading.
57. To apply oneself frequently to prayer.
58. Daily to confess one's past sins with tears and sighs to God, and to amend them for the time to come.
59. Not to fulfil the desires of the flesh: to hate one's own will.
60. To obey in all things the commands of the Abbot, even though he himself (which God forbid) should act otherwise: being mindful of that precept of the LORD: 'What they say, do ye; but what they do, do ye not.'
61. Not to wish to be called holy before one is so: but first to be holy, that one may be truly so called.
62. Daily to fulfil by one's deeds the commandments of God.
63. To love chastity.
64. To hate no man.
65. Not to be jealous, nor to give way to envy.
66. Not to love strife.
67. To fly from vainglory.
68. To reverence the Seniors.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

69. To love the juniors.

70. To pray for one's enemies in the love of Christ.

71. To make peace with an adversary before the setting of the sun.

72. And never to despair of God's mercy.¹

Those are the seventy-two words of command of the Benedictine code of holiness. Only about ten of them are normal to the rules of decent behaviour as practised by the world today.



If you like tests, put a red tick against those rules which you feel you can fairly say you normally keep. If you can place five ticks, then I am sure you can reasonably offer yourself as a suitable candidate for an official post in some lay Catholic organisation.

Twenty would suggest that you are the type of Christian whose advice is extremely valuable, for by this time ordinary standards of conduct will be nothing more to you than a rather nasty recollection.

If you can tick all the seventy-two points, then St Benedict would say that one day it might be possible to make something of you.

¹'The Instruments of Good Works', from *The Rule of St Benedict*, translated by a monk of St Benedict's Abbey, Fort Augustus; published by Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd.

SAINT BENEDICT'S TEST

To this prescription you can add eight hours a day devoted to prayer, either in common or by yourself, and eight hours of work; and after that, you will have some idea of what is meant by the 'contemplative life'.

Not a moment is left for idleness; weakness can look elsewhere for a lodging, and it is certainly the last place in which selfishness can establish itself in comfort.



One can also work the test backwards.

Mark in blue all the rules of St Benedict which, according to modern education, current morality and normal social practices, are regarded as old-fashioned, arbitrary, absurd or impossible.

The result is surprising. The common run of Christian will recognise that half his Christianity has gone by the board, and that a type of semi-religion has taken its place—sometimes almost a counter-religion, of which the principles still await definition.

Looking at the meagre total of red ticks, he is astounded to find himself so far from the ideal of perfection.

When he looks at the blue ticks he may wonder whether holiness is not merely unattainable, but may also perhaps be undesirable.

V. BENEDICTINE LIFE AT SOLESMES

WHEN electricity is to be brought to a region the first need is to make a barrage. A monastery with its enclosure may be likened to such a dam; the life of the world accumulates beneath its walls, after the fashion of the waters of an artificial lake, and a quantity sufficient to set a wise industry in motion is allowed to percolate. The motor power received by the monastery from the world is transformed into prayer and returned to its source as enlightenment.

An electric plant is also called a power station. Electricity moves quickly but does not automatically turn itself into current. Spiritual energy follows the same laws.

At the side of the secular clergy, the civilising monks of St Benedict, with their numerous spiritual power plants (of which the illustrious Abbey of Cluny was the parent foundation), have electrified, or rather I should say christianised, Europe. Today we forget the magnificence of this miracle.

Those who wish to become rich must first pay their debts; it would therefore be well for us to make up the balance sheet of what we owe the

Benedictine monks. We might begin with the many and varied material benefits for which we have to thank them.

Amongst these, Montalembert in his *Monks of the West* mentions the art of making grain more fertile, the acclimatisation of certain delicate fruits, the method of brewing beer from hops, the development of apiaries, the artificial insemination of fish, and the making of Parmesan cheese. It was also the monks who planted the vineyards of Burgundy and the Rhine.

Abbeys are economic entities, centres of charity and significant social organisations. The liberality of the mediaeval abbeys was proverbial. Every monastery was obliged to give alms according to its resources. 'Alms to be distributed every day!' 'Alms every three days!' 'Alms to all who are in need!' 'General alms-giving every Sunday, alms to all who beg.'

To the Benedictine Order we also owe the dissemination of learning, of justice and the love of peace.

When we were at school many of us were taught these facts, but we must have forgotten them, or we should not be questioning the usefulness of monks, and talking as though they did less work than other people; nor should we harbour the idea that manual labour, which antiquity regarded as servile, had received its letters patent of nobility from Karl

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Marx, instead of from St Joseph and St Benedict.

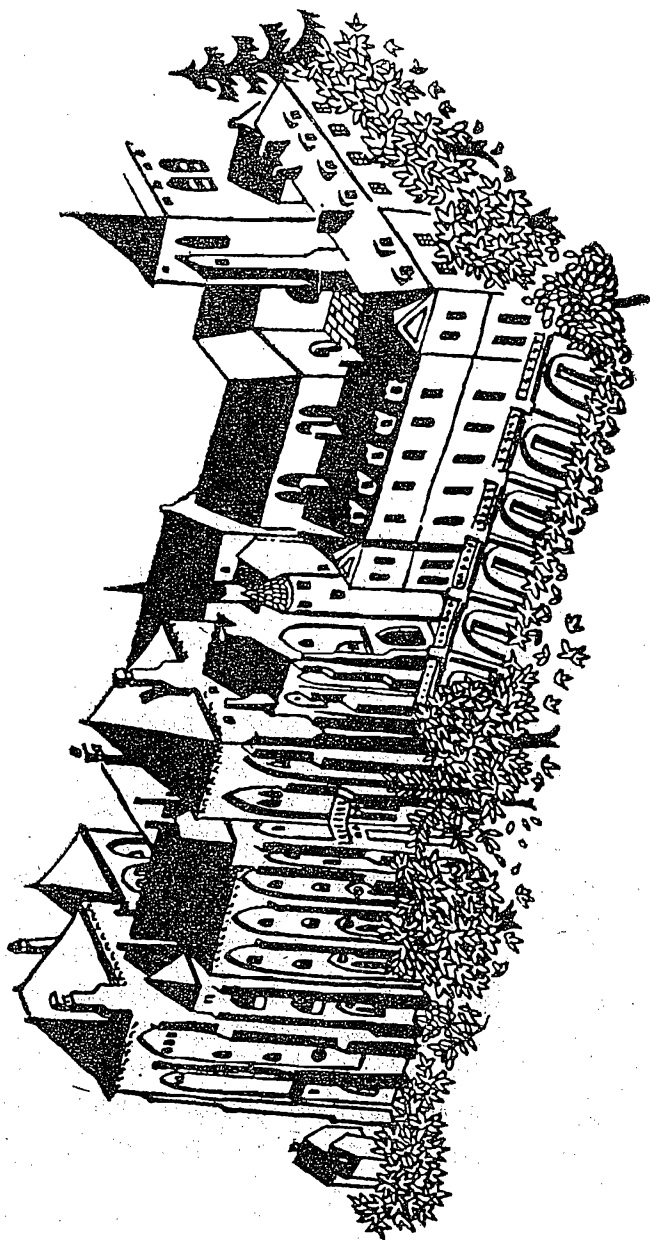
The one thing many of us recall is that it was the monks who preserved the Greek and Latin learning for us. But would not the mediaeval monks be greatly surprised to know that we are today more grateful to them for having copied the platitudes of Ovid than for having transmitted the Christian faith to us? We are the children of that faith; but we must be ungrateful children.



History is often written under the patronage of Evolution and Progress, and is therefore at times curiously biased.

Some historians try to persuade us that the heroic humanists of the Renaissance rescued the treasures of pagan letters from the dragon obscurantism at the peril of their lives; actually, all they needed to do was to pick up the tatters of Horace and Cicero which the university graduates let fall. If the Middle Ages were riddled by terror and horror of the classical texts, as they suggest, it seems hard to account for the number of copies of these very texts which the monks so industriously made.

Even when we do feel some gratitude to the monks on this score it is often of the kind that one



SOLESME

suffers towards a person who has put one under an unwanted obligation, so we continue to render our spontaneous thanks to the tardy pioneers of the Renaissance.



It seems as though we were fated to go on being mistaken in everything that concerns religious: we suspect them of sleeping when they are watching, of being idle when they are working, of being afraid of life, though in fact they are not in the least alarmed by it. There is hardly a point connected with their existence, vocation or psychology on which our judgment is right: Sometimes we say that they are glum, at others that they are too jolly; we accuse them at one moment of being their own grave-diggers, at another of indulging in unseemly revelry. These opposites are hard to reconcile. Must we call up a vision of tottering ghosts passing the bottle along the table with the lugubrious comment, 'Brother, we must die'?

Nor do we mind contradicting ourselves, for, having complained of the laziness of monks, we are quite prepared to qualify something requiring great patience as 'monkish work'. Lewd toppers, poor wraiths, fearful of the light of day—such is the picture we draw of the people of the world of the

religious. We never seem to see them as they are: simple men, well balanced, virtuous and generally smiling.



Fortunately our mistaken views do not prevent the religious life from continuing on its immutable course, or the Rule of St Benedict from standing as a monument of wisdom, which no revolution, or renaissance, nor any turmoil of men's minds can undermine. Within their monasteries the monks, distant brothers of their mediaeval forerunners, go on living their cloistered, peaceful and studious existence. They supply the Church with theologians and the indifferent world with jurists, historians and learned paleographers.

Their libraries are invariably rich and, since they are practical and experienced people, it does not surprise one to find that many of them are built of ferroconcrete and furnished with steel shelves so that they may survive both natural calamities and the progressive development of militarism. In consequence, they may one day again provide a honeycomb for a future renaissance.

The monks continue to fast and to pray, and if the remarkable expansion of the catering industry dispenses them from their duty to feed the way-

farer, they still apply the fifty-third article of their rule with exquisite charity. This obliges them to receive each guest, not as some emissary from heaven, but as though he were Christ himself. 'Reverence and affection should be shown in particular towards the poor' (fear of the rich being of itself all too potent a reason for honouring them, according to St Benedict).

Benedictine life centres round the Divine Office. Seven times a day the monks, in pairs, silently enter the sanctuary, bow towards the altar and then towards each other, and take their appointed places in their stalls. The Divine Office is composed of psalms, antiphons, hymns and prayers divided into 'Hours'. These are called Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline. Interspersed between the eight hours of work and the eight hours of rest, they are the third eight-hourly period of the monks' day—the one devoted to their main duty and essential function . . . the praise of God.

The Benedictine liturgy has always been distinguished by its beauty. In the old days at Cluny the 'Opus Dei' was performed as majestically as a coronation service, and the Church has adopted many of the motifs of its liturgy from the magnificent chants of the Benedictine Order. Indeed these monks now have, much against their inclination, achieved a reputation for organising the world's best

concerts of sacred music. As a result, once or twice a year the 'critics' of Gregorian chant make a point of visiting such Abbeys as Solesmes and indulging their curious capacity for enjoying something without loving it, and it has become necessary for the fashionable to be able to say that they have heard the Benedictine Fathers sing their Christmas Midnight Mass, or their Easter Mass; indeed, it is as much of a social duty as having heard the fourth symphony of Bela Bartok, or seen the latest exhibition of Picasso's works.

Needless to say, the Benedictine Fathers have not encouraged this cult. They sing today as they sang in the twelfth century, not for the ears of critics but to the glory of the Invisible Presence, and one might almost say that if they sing beautifully it is because they cannot do otherwise. Mediocrity cannot survive the centuries; no ascetic, however much taste he had for penance, could manage to sing the same cadence three or four times a day for over forty years if there were the faintest chance that it could ever sound like an electric drill. The beauty of plain-chant stands repetition over an indeterminate period because it is impersonal; it comes straight from the soul without passing through the factory of musical composition. It is a homage, a prayer, not an art.

The Benedictines pray, they do not give recitals.

VI. THE SILENCE OF THE CISTERCIANS

WHEN a visitor enters a Cistercian monastery the brother porter meets him with a smile and the guest-master smilingly leads him through the silent passages to his room. The smile is gay and kindly; it economises words, and dispenses with the use of conventional phrases.

After all, the guest-master has also taken a vow of silence, and if his functions give him an official dispensation to speak, he is not sorry to save up a few words for great occasions at the price of a smile.



The contrast between austerity and smiling faces is characteristic of the Cistercians, and strikes one the moment one enters one of their monasteries; no doubt the paradox is only resolved in the kingdom of the elect, when the smile is transformed into beatitude and the austerity into perfection. At Cîteaux, for instance, the heavy iron doors of the enclosure on which are inscribed 'O Beata Solitudo . . . O Sola Beatitudo . . .' do not open, as one might

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fear, on to a cemetery with identical headstones in alignment, but disclose a charming garden, around which runs a pleasant stream. The visitor, however, would do well not to trust to the amiable appearance of idleness given by this rivulet, for beyond the garden it is halted by a dam and made to drive a turbine. At Cîteaux everyone works, and if the garden seems useless that is only because it is kept for visitors.



The Cistercian Order, still commonly known as Trappists (from La Trappe, near Mortagne, the first monastery to adopt the reform instituted by the Abbé de Rancé), is a strong branch of the old Benedictine tree which emerged in the twelfth century.

The word 'trap' has unpleasant associations. One is apt to visualise the unwary traveller who steps out only to find himself falling into an oubliette. But the dictionary reassures us as to the origin of the Trappists' name. In the local dialect of the Mortagne district *trapan* means a mound. So we are not dealing with a hole but with a hillock. It would be interesting to know what part this little misunderstanding played in building up the sombre reputation of the Order.

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The Cistercians and Carthusians are the purest type of contemplative.



In accordance with the Rule of St Benedict the Cistercians divide their time between the divine office, study of the Scriptures, and manual labour. They work their own land and are 'true monks living by the work of our hands as our fathers and the apostles did before us'.

They never leave their property and stay as far as possible within the enclosure which comprises the buildings of the monastery and a few acres of garden. They rise at two in the morning on ordinary days and at half-past one on great feasts when the Office is longer. Several hours before the first sign of wakening life can be seen in our cities the Cistercians are up praying for the milkman, who will probably never know about them in this world.

Silence is their unalterable rule; a rudimentary code of signals permits them to communicate necessary facts. Bread is signified by pressing the thumbs and first fingers together so as to form a triangle, and 'I understand' by running the back of the hand over the lips. If a finger is run round the forehead,

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sketching a crown or veil, this indicates 'woman'. 'Wine' is referred to with some sense of humour by placing the tip of the first finger at the end of the nose.

Women particularly consider this vow of silence cruel, and yet when there is a sudden pause in the conversation and even the tinkle of a teaspoon has died away, people say 'an angel is passing through the room'; no one thinks of inviting him to stay. The Cistercians keep him with them for life—that is all there is to it.



The silence of the monks is not a punishment: I doubt if they even regard it as one of their more difficult mortifications.

I had been told that when a Superior was so unwise as to give a monk permission to speak, his customary silence was often replaced by a torrent of words as though some dam had broken. In my experience this is not true. Whether these monks are silent from obedience, wisdom, or a taste for being mute, there is no doubt that silence is a valued asset in their lives, and they do not seem inclined to part with it. It surrounds them like the serene waters of a lake, or as a mirror in which at some moment they may catch sight of the face of the long-awaited loved

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one. No wonder that we hesitate to disturb its quietude with the clatter of words.

At all events, this silent life does not seem to depress its exponents.

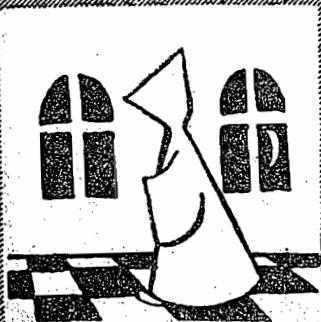
The guest-master smiles whenever he meets you; if your footsteps disturb a monk whose nose is buried in a book he looks up smiling. When you see a monk kneeling before the statue of Our Lady which stands in the garden, you may feel tempted to steal up behind him and pull back his hood, but you won't discover anything new—for you will still find a smiling face.



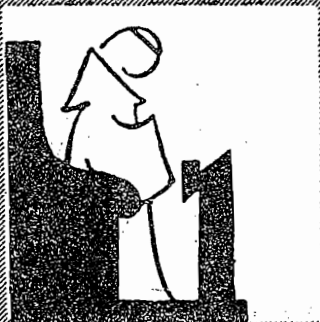
Monks who are not priests are called brothers. I met one at Cîteaux who used to be the village carpenter. He came up to the Abbey one day to mend some chairs; the place attracted him, the silence spoke to him, and when the last chair stood firmly on its feet, he sat down on it and never again left the enclosure.

This man's smile had a quality of gratitude in it, outstanding even in a Cistercian monastery—and even though there can be no doubt that smiling is a Cistercian characteristic.

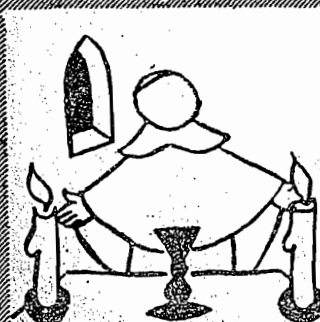
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2 a.m. Rise. Apparel: white cowl. Feast Days, rise 1.30.



2.05 a.m. Church, Little Office of Our Lady, Office of the day until 4 a.m.

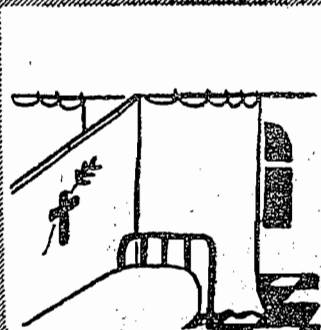


4 a.m. Mass, 45 minutes free time.



5.30 a.m. Chapter.

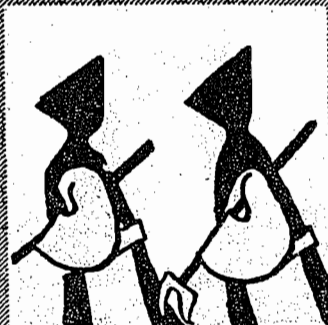
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6 a.m. Return to the dormitory. Housework. Breakfast.



8 a.m. Solemn High Mass. Sext.



9 a.m. Out to work. Apparel: white tunic, black scapular.

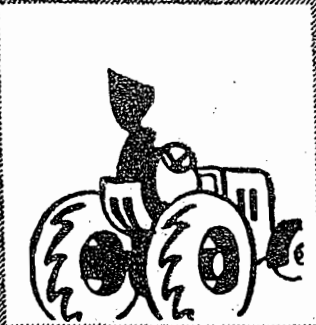


11.30 a.m. Meal in common: never any meat.

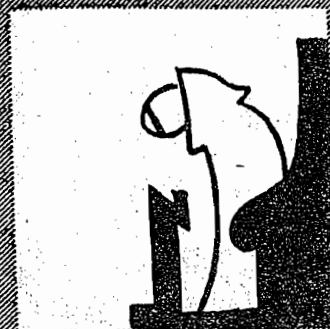
THE SILENCE OF THE CISTERCIANS



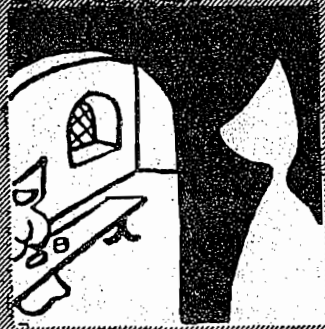
12.15 p.m. Rest, siesta or walk.



1.15 p.m. Work in the fields, in the workshops or on the farm. Modern equipment.

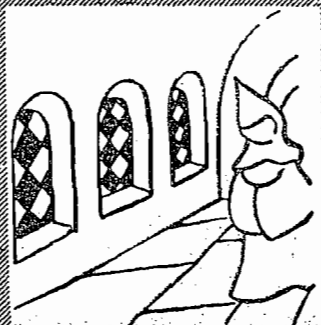


4.30 p.m. Vespers in chapel. The monk is in choir seven times a day.

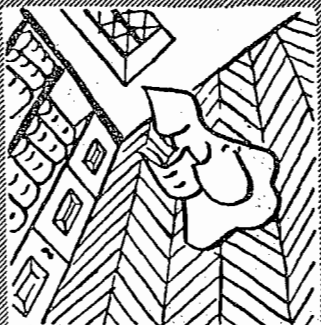


5.15 p.m. Collation.

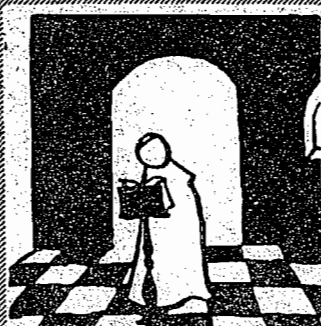
THE SALT OF THE EARTH



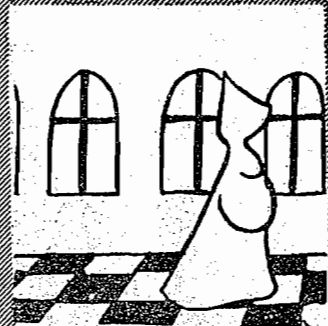
5.45 p.m. Meditation in the cloister.



Reading in the library, theological lecture, etc.



6.30 p.m. Compline, the hour of the 'Salve Regina'.



7 p.m. To bed. (From Easter to September 14th at 8 p.m.)

VII. SAINT BERNARD

THOUGH the Cistercians were not founded by St Bernard, they certainly owe him the major part of their spiritual heritage. He was the model of a knightly character, with all its integrity, loyalty and self-sacrifice, but he had also, if one may respectfully allude to it, one of the knight's honourable faults: a tendency to draw the sword from its scabbard with remarkable promptitude.

In 1112 he entered Cîteaux as though he were taking a strong-point. He arrived at the head of twenty-five young noblemen whom he had converted in the twinkling of an eye.

There are, he said, upright souls and circling souls. The former turn without hesitation towards the sovereign good; the latter exhaust themselves in pursuit of the desirable things of this world. A man whose wife is beautiful, if he sees a woman of greater beauty, will find his eyes and heart full of passion; the well-dressed man will covet a still finer garment; the man who is already rich will become envious of those who are richer than himself. Daily we see people who own large properties adding to them field by field, expanding their boundaries, impelled by a covetousness for which there can be

no satisfaction. Others we see who live in royal dwellings and vast palaces and these will add new buildings to the old ones . . . they will build, and pull down, and rebuild. They will make what is square round, and what is round, square. And what of the people already loaded with honours? Insatiable ambition pushes them to seek to rise higher and higher. To coveting things there is no end, and these things cannot reduce, far less satisfy, the craving. Thus the wandering spirit which runs vainly between the varied and false pleasures of the world exhausts itself without finding fulfilment, for all that this starving spirit has absorbed seems very little to him when compared with what yet remains to be devoured, and he is less satisfied with what he possesses than tormented by what he still lacks.

If only he could have everything! Perhaps if he could possess all created things, then he might turn to their creator.

'But,' St Bernard remarks caustically, 'the brevity of life, the weakness of human endeavour, and the number of competitors render this universal possession absolutely impossible.'

So there is no hope that the circling soul will get out of his labyrinth—except by rising above it.

St Bernard himself is the perfect example of the upright soul. He goes straight forward, looking neither backwards nor to the side. Abelard, for instance, has to stand directly in his path before he

becomes aware of him. Then, with one stroke of his lance, he overthrows the brilliant sophist, gives him his hand, picks him up and goes on his way.

Though a sick man, St Bernard refused to rest, overcame his weakness, and answered the call of his Lord, regardless of the cost.

On his way he stopped at Vezelay and preached the Second Crusade, sent Pope Eugenius III (one of his former monks) a series of recommendations which came sometimes very near to reproof; exchanged a few sword-thrusts with the Albigensian heresy, dedicated some beautiful prayers to Our Lady, and sang—(this is certainly the right verb)—seventy sermons on the Cantic of Canticles, thereby endowing the Church with a magnificent work on mystical theology and the world with good reason for pondering what faith can accomplish in a loving heart.



St Bernard was in no way attracted by the rôle of leader which devolved upon him as a consequence of his gifts.

His upright spirit was extremely detached from this world of unlikeness (*regio dissimilitudinis*), in which man, disfigured by evil, no longer presents

an image of his creator. He fled it in order to take the most direct road to the kingdom of likeness, where the soul, having recovered its lost dignity, is able to be united to its Lord.

St Bernard had above all other things a great love of God, and for this reason he preferred the hidden life of the monastery to all others. He was happy when he could enter into its silence and austerity, and one has the impression that after each sortie he would have liked to have increased his mortifications in order to make up for the time he had lost. The Cistercian mystique even today seems to be informed by this spirit of recuperation.

These monks stress penance as though they felt that they were in arrears in relation to some vast programme of austerity. They have learned from their brilliant leader that 'the measure of the love of God is to love Him immeasurably' and nothing seems so detestable to them as a lack of generosity.

Together with this all-embracing law they have inherited from him his soldierly simplicity, his devotion to Our Lady, a certain shyness in regard to pure speculation and gratuitous displays of art, a readiness to give battle in the spiritual field, and a boldness in detachment which is perhaps one of the secrets of their happiness.

VIII. CISTERCIAN VOCATIONS

ANYONE wishing to enter the religious state must be attracted to, and have an aptitude and vocation for, the religious life. Attraction arises from a natural disposition towards the life of a recluse or of a missionary; aptitude implies determination, level-headedness and the capacity for living in community. Vocation—well, the origin of the word shows that it is not something which depends on the candidate himself.

These three conditions are those required of postulants by the theologians, but current opinion translates them thus: Disillusionment (replacing attraction); disappointment in love (replacing aptitude); and disorder of the mind arising from some metaphysical cause (in lieu of vocation). Loss of fortune is also generally accepted as a good basis for conversion.

If a young man announces that he is going into a monastery, the first reaction is to suspect an unhappy love affair—after all, he may not have had enough time to lose his money, or to become disillusioned with life. If no woman can be found, it then becomes necessary to diagnose a nervous disorder of intellectual origin; if this is untenable

because of the cheerful and relaxed appearance of the youth, one is then left to shrug one's shoulders and refer to 'a call'.

References to 'a call' are made by respectable persons when they have taken leave of their critical faculties but are determined to remain polite.

I know plenty of people who, had they seen St Paul on the road to Damascus, the persecutor falling at the feet of his victims, would have gone on their way muttering: 'No doubt another fellow who has heard the call,' and they would never have paused to question what this call might be which could cause a man to fall from his horse while leaving others to moulder in their saddles.



Of course, on occasions a disappointed lover will throw himself into a monastery, as he might throw himself into a river—or take to drink. There is the story of the Superior of a monastery who received this telegram:

'All is over. Arriving tomorrow. Reserve cell.'¹

But unrequited passions do not engender monks. In these circumstances, relegation to a chilly cell is apt to restore the wits very quickly, and once

¹*Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle*, Alfred de Musset.

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restored to their owner they very rapidly convince him that he has come to the wrong establishment.



Distaste for life has never caused anyone to develop a taste for Heaven, and yet a taste for Heaven is the hallmark of the religious vocation. This heaven bears no relation to the disastrous pictures of 'the beyond' which the cinema occasionally offers us—an uninhabitable and unhealthy country, where the elect are seen, exhausted by song, with sugary smiles on their glazed faces, apparently held in an unending Sunday afternoon.

One cannot imagine that a vision of this sort causes the lightning conversions which often lead men to the contemplative Orders (and particularly to the Cistercian Order)—yet these men have been changed by one glimpse of Heaven.



Many vocations to the Cistercian Order manifest themselves apparently from one moment to another, and it seems as though they meet with no inner

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resistance or questioning. One could say that they are instantaneous, like the conversion of St Paul. It is not of course always so, but it happens in a sufficient number of cases for psychologists, whose system does not allow for grace, to have given up trying to account for it.

Many paths lead to the Cistercian monasteries, but the army is a frequent approach. At the Mother House, the Abbey of Cîteaux, there is a strong garrison including several officers. The most senior amongst them found himself parting with his top boots and his stars one Christmas Eve. After a rowdy party he had gone with some of his comrades to roar carols at Midnight Mass—as good a way as any other of digesting *pâté de foie gras*. There, amid the thundering of the organ, a change took place for which no psychologist could account. The army lost a promising officer, and Cîteaux received a postulant who was soon to become an Abbot. Not for long, however, did he retain this office, for he persuaded his brothers in religion to allow him to relinquish his mitre and crozier. The general withdrew into the ranks.



It is not unusual for whole families to 'go' Cistercian. A son may well meet his father in the

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cloister, while three miles away his mother is taking the veil with the Cistercian nuns (usually called Trappistines). There are instances of three generations being found in the Order. Must this lead one to suspect that disappointment in love is a hereditary complaint?



I cannot remember whether it was a Cistercian or a Carthusian who told me the following story. Anyway, wherever it ended it began on a Shrove Tuesday at a fancy-dress ball. A charming young man wandered among the harlequins and masked ladies, seeking a partner. It was not a moment in which distaste for life, a broken heart, or distress of mind had any place. He wanted to dance, and he was not considering his eternal salvation. A girl who was attending to her make-up caught sight of him in the mirror of her compact, turned round to him, and shaking her powder-puff at him, laughingly remarked: 'Remember that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return.' Grace seeks those whom it calls at all times and in all places, even at a dance on Shrove Tuesday.

The girl never knew the consequences of her mock sententiousness. All she saw was the stranger

brushing some powder off his coat and walking out into the night. How could she imagine that with a whisk of her puff she had sent a young man into a monastery for life: a young man, mind you, who only wanted to dance.

Many admirable parents believe that they are losing their child at the precise moment in which he has found himself, so that it is often more convenient to confess to gambling debts or to having half-a-dozen mistresses than to announce that one is going to become a Cistercian.

A young man of my acquaintance who earned his living by drawing caricatures for a ribald paper came one day to tell his parents that he intended to enter a Cistercian monastery. They gave a cry of horror. All the usual causes were probed without success: he was neither in love nor in debt. There remained nothing to fall back on but an adolescent attack of mysticism, which would probably cure itself if no one meddled with it; alternatively, his decision was attributed to a 'flight from life': obviously a young bohemian who was incapable of making a good career might be expected to prefer getting up at two in the morning to sing the Divine Office to staying in bed till eight and reaching his office at ten.

Vocations will always be a mystery to worldly people; their aversion to the higher forms of religious life has remained intact since the days when

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St Thomas Aquinas penned a page to Christian parents begging them not to put obstacles in the way of the sanctification of their children.

Anyway, this young man was extremely annoyed that he should be suspected of wishing to make an end of his life when he knew that he was on the brink of a miraculous renewal. He was not concerned for his own reputation, but for the honour of the Cistercians he did not wish his decision to appear in the light of a miserable failure and a search for asylum. So he cashed his savings, and went off with a friend to Morocco. They bought land, cleared it, dug it, sowed it, built a house, and lived the hard life of pioneers. They worked day in and day out, and after two years they began to see the result of their labours; the farm paid. They walked up to the top of a small hill to contemplate their estate. One went back to develop it, the other (feeling that he could now prove that Cîteaux was more than a refuge for an unsuccessful commercial artist) made over his share to his friend and took the next plane back to France. At Dijon he had a festive evening, then threw away his last cigarette as he entered the doors of Cîteaux. That was twenty years ago. What more can I tell you about him? His hair is going grey, and despite Cîteaux's traditional association with images of death, he is smiling like all the other Cistercians.

IX. THE CARTHUSIANS

THE Grande Chartreuse is the Mother House of the Carthusian Order. To reach it one must follow a valley which pierces the mountain like a sword-thrust; the path gradually rises above a torrent, passes through a tunnel and leads one into the 'desert' of the Grande Chartreuse. Here, near to the edge of the eternal snow, stands the silent city of the monks. But to get a good view of the monastery, one must go still further up the mountain till one is able to see the white buildings shining between the black boles of the fir trees. From here one can take in the whole lay-out; the thirty-six square cells built along the cloister, the streets, the towers, the containing wall surmounted by its pointed towers looking like a drawing in a book of Hours.



The Carthusians of the Mother House saw things 'big' and 'high'. The bogs of the Cistercians and the pastures of the Benedictines were not to their taste.

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They needed the peaks and precipices of the mountains. A good many other Carthusian monasteries are also immense, and because each solitary has four rooms and a strip of garden to himself, the cloister which joins them to each other is sometimes as long as a boulevard. That of the Grande Chartreuse is about seven hundred feet long. Since it is built on uneven ground, and as there is a steep slope in the middle of it, one cannot see where it ends, and it seems to disappear into the mountain. It is an odd sight to see a monk's habit float along this bright tunnel and then vanish into the distance like the sail of a ship going over the horizon.



In my experience most Carthusians seem to be on the same scale as their buildings. I don't remember seeing a small one at the Grande Chartreuse, though I do not suppose that they are actually required to be six-footers like the men of the Brigade of Queen Elizabeth's Foot Guards. All those I saw gave me the impression of being tall, slim, and having a slight stoop—what we call the runner-bean type. I cannot account for the height; well, perhaps I imagined it, just as when I paid my first visit I had the impression that they all had blue eyes. Afterwards I observed

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that this had been an optical illusion: perhaps I felt that they reflected the sky.



Most people know very little about St Bruno, who founded La Grande Chartreuse, from which all other Carthusian monasteries descend. He was born in Cologne in 1030, but went early to France and was known to his contemporaries as Bruno Gallicanus, which was more than a luggage-label and implied something akin to naturalisation.

He was converted soon after the death of Diocres, of whom we do not know much either, except that he seems to have had a fondness for the minor Latin poets and to have harboured some tendency to literary vanity. According to legend, he rose three times in his coffin to announce to his horrified friends that he had been judged and found wanting. Hagio-graphers, painters and sculptors have used this episode as an excuse for giving us dreary pictures of St Bruno, who usually looks depressed and as though he were perpetually haunted by fear of the last judgment. He is frequently depicted carrying a skull in much the same fashion as a lady carries a handbag.

But in fact we have no reason to suppose that St

Bruno was obsessed by the physical aspect of death; what we do know is that he desired to remain hidden.

One can imagine St Bernard going forward with his face lifted to the sun, but it is not so easy to recognise the features of St Bruno beneath his cowl. He seems to have passed through life with his eyes lowered, and without glancing at the world. At one time he occupied the post of Professor of Theology at Rheims, but left discreetly when he heard that he was likely to be made an Archbishop, hid himself in the wild region of Sèche Fontaine, and, when he was about to be tracked to his lair, set off again with the intention of placing the Alps between himself and his admirers. On his way he stopped in Grenoble, where he asked its saintly bishop for the address of a satisfactory desert. This kindly personage offered him the magnificently desolate region of the Grande Chartreuse, indicating that it was to be found somewhere in the chaos of the Alps of the Dauphiné. Here, with six French companions, he founded (in a fit of humble absent-mindedness) the most angelic of the contemplative Orders.

In effect he established for all time a perfect model of a Charter House: a row of separate cells (evolved from the first huts put up at the expense of the good Bishop of Grenoble) joined by a gallery which led to the Chapel. Thus the hermit life of the Fathers of the Desert and the community life instituted by St

Benedict were united for the first time. When he had accomplished this, St Bruno went to die on the far side of the Alps, having declined another archbishopric in favour of a grotto in Calabria.



A Carthusian leaves his cell three times in the twenty-four hours: at night for the Divine Office, which lasts about three-and-a-half hours; in the morning for Mass; and in the evening for Vespers. All the rest of the time he is alone. His quarters consist of four rooms and face a small garden which is enclosed by the wall of the monastery, that of the next cell, and that of the cloister. On the first floor is the room termed the Ave Maria, because it is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and because each time the monk enters it he says a 'Hail Mary'. A second room is called the 'cubiculum', or living-room; it comprises a small oratory, an alcove containing a bed (which consists of a hair-mattress placed on planks and a pair of sheets), a stove, a table, and a chair. A crucifix hangs on the wall, sometimes a few flowers picked during the monk's weekly walk may be set beneath it. The very small space between these two rooms is adapted for use as a study.

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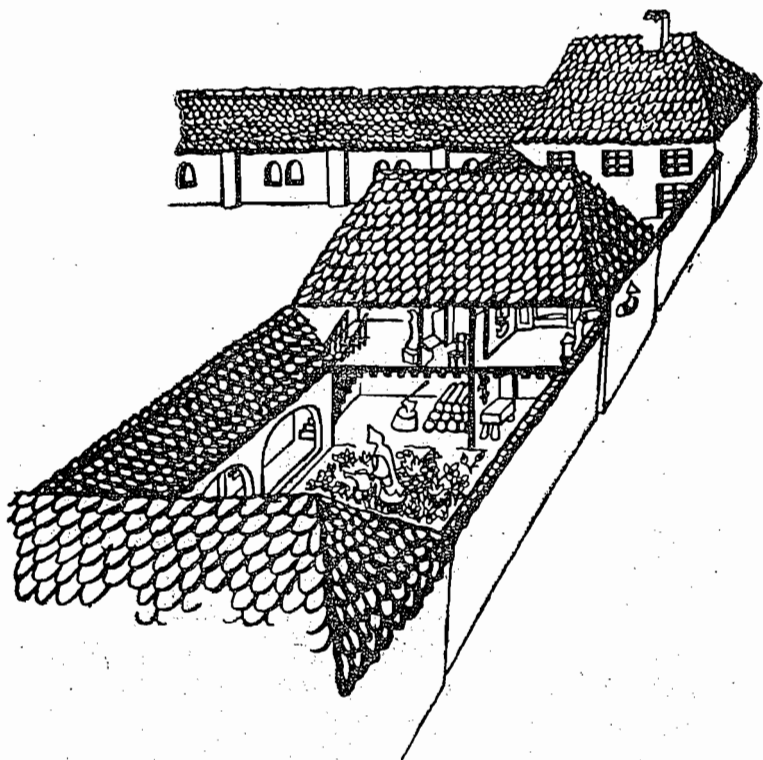
On the ground floor there is a place for stacking wood, and a workshop in which the monk spends two or three hours a day doing manual labour, considered simply as a diversion. Some of the monks turn chair-legs, others carve statues; some simply split logs. One father who was a heavy sleeper used to make instruments designed to wake up the lethargic—the most effective design was one which caused a block of wood of about the thickness of a missal to fall on the sleeper's feet at the appropriate hour.

It is said of this monk that on his deathbed he remarked hopefully: 'Well, now at last I am going to wake up.'

The gardens are left to the owners' taste. Some are full of flowers, others of vegetables, some of weeds and some of stones; it all depends on the monk's talent and his age.

The Carthusian's day has no beginning or end. He gets up a little before six, but then he was up before midnight to sing the Office, and stayed in the chapel till two in the morning; he goes to bed at seven p.m., but only for three hours. (Thus, to take one's rest in two periods, and on a hard bed, must be rather like the snatch of sleep a traveller manages to get on a platform bench between two trains.) About ten o'clock in the morning a brother comes from the kitchen and pushes the only meal of the day through the hatch. This consists of fish

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CHARTERHOUSE ENCLOSURE

On the first floor the Ave Maria, study, cubiculum or living room. On the ground floor, workshop and wood pile on the left, which runs parallel to the cloister; the door and hatch of the cell open into it.

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(never any meat), vegetables and compôte of varying colours but fairly uniform taste. For the rest of the twenty-four hours the monk has to fast, except for the five minutes it takes him to swallow the piece of bread and fruit which he keeps back from his main meal to eat in the evening as his collation.

When a monk requires something he writes a note and passes it through his hatch; soon afterwards the object will be found in the hatch. These silent communications form the major part of the Carthusian's relations with the outside world. Sometimes he may spend a week without exchanging a word with a living soul. The monks may, however, talk, if it is necessary, and also may go to the library to take any books which they may require.



Once a week they go for a walk (*spatiamentum*); this is now obligatory for all except the sick and aged; it lasts for three hours and while walking the monks talk.



The grandeur and strange charm of their solitude

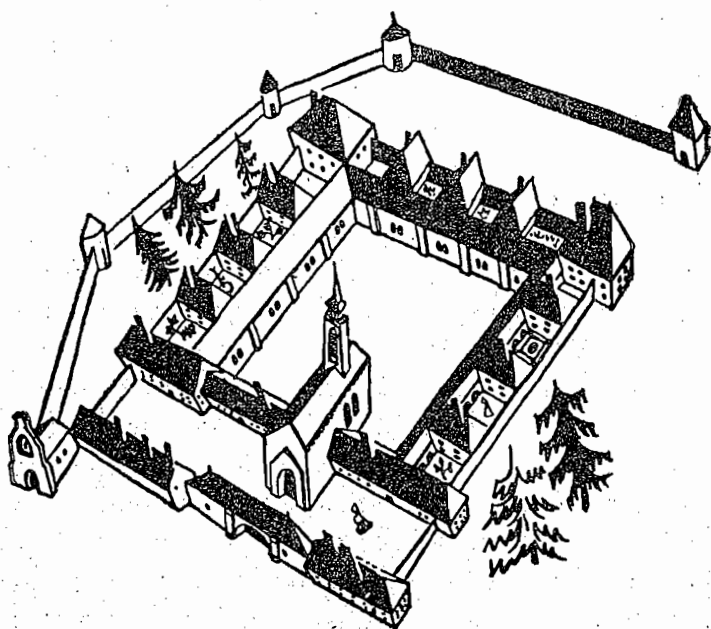
seem to be the cause of what a Carthusian once referred to as 'the temptation of a desert island'. Most of us have had times when we dreamed of living on a desert island in the Pacific, situated outside the area of cyclones and bearing a reasonably good food supply. We may have seen ourselves decently clothed in fig-leaves, lying in the shade of a banana tree, stretching an indolent hand at about midday towards a hanging lunch, picking what we needed from the bread tree, the butter tree, and the crockery tree, far from humanity and free as a bird.

A Carthusian monastery must be a deep disappointment to self-appointed Robinson Crusoes. It is not a climate for Crusoes, for no one is free to arrange his life as he feels inclined.

The convent bell rings vigilantly, punctually, and calls all the monks to rise, to work, to sleep, to prayer, to Mass, to Vespers, to Compline and to rest; it reminds them of the other canonical hours and also of the passage of time itself, ringing not only the hours and the half-hours, but even the quarters. All the community obeys its clear, imperative voice, which seems to visitors to ring out over a dead city. A monk may be working in the garden or writing one of those profound treatises on mysticism (with which it is pretended that the Carthusians light their fires); so soon as he hears the call to Nones or Vespers, he drops his spade or his pen and hurries to the oratory or to the chapel.

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Except during the rest period (which itself is cut in two by the night Office), the Carthusian's day is well and truly slashed by a number of different duties; these cause him to hurry from the oratory to the garden, from the garden to the workshop, from the workshop to the chapel, from the chapel to the cloister, or to bed, so that the only continuity he can experience is that of continual obedience.



The cell separates him from the world, the bell detaches him from himself.

The average Robinson does not stand up to the Carthusian bell for more than forty-eight hours. Shut up in a cell which seemed large when he arrived but by the second day appeared to have shrunk, the candidate discovers that in seeking independence he has only found discipline. His meal having been eaten in less than ten minutes, he may pick up a book, but is it much fun reading something which one will have little opportunity of discussing with another person?

The prospect of endless days of monotony stretches out before him (and Carthusians often live into their eighties); his 'self' which did not appear very demanding in the world, where in fact most of its wishes were satisfied, now takes on gigantic proportions, a huge Man Friday who has no intention of being dismissed.

And all the while the cell seems to be getting smaller and smaller. Man Friday stamps his foot, the bell rings . . . it is unendurable. Robinson gives up, and asks to see the railway time-table.

The Carthusian Order is the most austere of all orders; a religious is allowed to leave any other body if he wants to join the company of St Bruno because his decision means that he is preferring a higher form of monastic life.

According to the Church, the practice of the

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Carthusian rule is in itself an exercise of heroic virtue, so that one might argue that any Carthusian who observed the rule throughout his life is eligible for canonisation. But in fact not many Carthusians have been canonised, for St Bruno left to his followers his own inclination for being inconspicuous.



When he enters the monastery the postulant first receives a black cloak; this he wears as a sign of mourning for the man he has been until that day (only after he has passed his novitiate does he receive his white habit). From the receipt of his black cloak he begins to 'disappear'. He will be given a new name, Dom Raphael, or Dom John. If what he writes seems worth publishing it will appear anonymously. (The label on the liqueur bottles is one of the few objects signed with the Carthusian signature, and this no doubt because of a legal necessity.) In Carthusian cemeteries the crosses bear no names. One can think of hundreds of celebrated Dominicans, and even the Cistercians have not been able to hide St Bernard or the Abbé de Rancé from us, but only specialists in Christian mysticism have ever heard of Denys the Carthusian, or Dom Innocent

Le Masson, who are two of the chief glories of the Carthusian Order. Anonymity thus acts as an enclosure supplementary to those of the walls of the cell and of the silence.

But this effacement is only the negative aspect (and one must admit that it is a fairly depressing one so far as the world is concerned); its counterpart is a resurrection, a turning towards the source of light by the wretched exiled being who is also brother to the angels.



There is poetry in these lives which have weighed their anchors. All we know of Heaven is contained in the enigmatic form of the mysteries of faith, and for a creature of flesh and blood to renounce the world and decide to live in the region of the spirit is as tough, exciting and dangerous an adventure as that of Christopher Columbus setting sail, without certainty of return, for a country which was invisible, though probable.

He too was sustained both by faith and by reason. He believed in the stars, but one can imagine that there must have been moments when, looking out at the exasperating, ever-watery horizon, he must have doubted whether his faith might be without

adequate foundation and whether reason were a sure compass.

The Carthusian monk who leaves our coasts and sails the tide, by the grace of God, knows these reactions of fear and hope. After the first enthusiasm of departure has calmed down and once the high seas have been reached, comes the time when he seems to remain stationary in the centre of a vast circle of water; no sail is in sight, and those reasons which were valid enough when he set out may now appear hardly sufficient to justify him in persevering. It is said that it is usually towards the age of forty that the solitary sailor of spiritual seas begins to wonder whether the Indies will ever show up at the other end of his telescope. He is tempted to think that his sacrifice may have been useless; is he going to see any results? His neighbour, for whose spiritual benefit he has given up so much, knows nothing about it, or, if he does, despises or hates him for it.

This is only a passing storm; he goes forward by the light of one star and then a second, knowing that there is another world.

He is the advance guard of Christianity.

X. THE CARMELITES

TRADITION tells us that the Carmelite Order originated on Mount Carmel, which stands at the border of Galilee and Samaria, and is the Holy Mountain of the Jewish people. Full of caves and originally covered with trees, it was a natural hide-out for anchorites and was also the favourite observatory of the Prophet Eliseus. Here, under the guidance of St John the Baptist, the Forerunner, this composite Order acquired the two main principles of its ancient vocation: solitude and recollection, which together constitute the lamp and the oil of the contemplative life.

But since the time when the Carmelites first took up arms, they have come down from the Holy Mountain, changed their uniform, their character and their way of life, and have spread all over the world. In 1247 Pope Innocent VI confirmed the new Constitution drawn up by St Simon Stock which turned the hermits into mendicants and the contemplatives into preachers; and so the desert fathers conscripted into the apostolic infantry of the line lost their guerilla independence. At times the Carmelite lamp burned low. It was at one such moment that two

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Spaniards lit a flame that has shone brightly ever since.



These two lamplighters have been recognised by the Church as Doctors of the spiritual life. Their one inconvenience is that they were such good teachers and such good writers that in the centuries which have passed since their death a host of critics have believed themselves obliged to explain them. For some three hundred years now St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila have provided material for innumerable studies by psychologists, and theories about them are advanced and refuted interminably.

The more ambitious among these theorists deal complacently with 'the problem of mystical experience', as if this were something which could be resolved by a person who had never attempted to share the experience. It is possible, of course, to discuss the works of St John of the Cross and to describe their author, even though some descriptions of him are far from accurate. Huysmans, for instance, paints the portrait of 'a terrible being dripping with blood and dry-eyed'; whereas in fact St John was an extremely gentle person who suffered much persecution.



INTERPRETATION OF A DRAWING ILLUSTRATING ST JOHN OF THE CROSS. Left: the imperfect way in search of heavenly goods. Right: the wrong path in search of worldly goods. Centre: the steep way of perfection, through the rejection of both the other paths (which lead nowhere), to the summit of the Holy Mountain, 'mors in quo beneplacitum'.

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But while we should be able to achieve a lifelike picture of the man, we are no more likely to get a true description of his mystical experience from a person who has not entered into it than we are to get a true account of death from an author who has not been resurrected once or twice.

These two experiences, of death and of the mystical life, have something in common, and if St John wrote about one of them, this was in order to help people engaged in the adventure to find their way, not to explain the 'way' to those who have no intention of engaging in it.

A mystic of his calibre is a man who is on fire, and before this phenomenon the critic can only ask for a supply of asbestos.

'Good gracious!' he exclaims, peering through his dark glasses. 'How did the wretched man set fire to himself? Perhaps he stayed too long in the sun. Maybe the lenses of his glasses caused him to ignite. I believe what is burning is the object which the mystics call "the old man"; in that case it must be made of dry wood . . . very interesting.'

The only satisfactory thing which could happen to this critic would be that he himself should ignite . . . for then he would share the experience and have something to write about.

The doctrine of St John is based on complete dis-possession, an offensive variant of the 'scorched earth' tactics applied to spiritual warfare. This 'way'

seemed too much of a short cut, and also too disagreeable, to the religious of his age, whose rule had been relieved of much of its early harshness and who were living in some degree of comfort, even though the term can only be applied in a relative sense to their form of life. Never did any holy man suffer more disciplinary punishment or incur more unjustified penances than St John at the hands of his step-brothers in religion.

They wanted to silence him, to extinguish him, but this was a bad bet. The mystic fire thrives on anything which comes to hand, and persecution is particularly combustible material. Besides, while the 'mitigated monks', as they were called, did their best to stop the fire it raged through the convents of the Carmelite nuns who were inspired by St Teresa of Avila.



St John of the Cross and St Teresa were twin souls to whom any double-dealing and compromise were unthinkable and who felt at home only in the atmosphere of the absolute. Both followed the same way, but one followed it in darkness, the other by the light of the sun.

St John describes in sombre but powerful images

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the same things which St Teresa shows us in terms of sparkling precious stones and shining stars, and the contrast is completed in the earthly destinies of these extraordinary heavenly twins. In the course of her crusade for the reform of the Carmelite Order St Teresa gave battle twenty times, and was twenty times victorious. She founded an impressive number of new houses, and died in 1582 surrounded by her daughters, already an honoured figure, knowing that her work had not been in vain. Ten years later St John died at the feet of his persecutors, after a life which had been constantly subjected to the violence of moral and physical suffering. He had been shuttled between those who did not understand him at all and those who understood him too well, and lived in great loneliness. But he never uttered a complaint, and when he knew that death was approaching murmured the opening verses of Psalm 121: 'I have rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord.'

With these two living torches burning within its walls the Carmelite House could not do otherwise than catch fire. The Discalced Carmelites such as we know them today spring directly from St Teresa and St John. Their Rule has some resemblance to that of the Dominicans, because, while by contemplation they approach the Carthusian way, by their activities they are nearer to the Jesuits. Like the Dominicans, too, the Carmelites are preachers,

professors and missionaries, while their sisters, the nuns, live a permanently enclosed existence as pure contemplatives.

Father Bruno, the editor of *Études Carmélitaines*, writes:

‘St Teresa and St John are masters of religious psychology, they are our outstanding leaders in this field. They have also to an unparalleled degree what might be called “the commonsense” of eternal life and derive from it a practical approach to this life also. They are the Doctors to whom not only all Catholics, but many outside the Church, turn when they want to advance from a speculative knowledge of divine things to an experimental knowledge!’ (*La Vie Carmélitaine*, by R. P. Bruno de J.M. [Desclée de Brouwer].)

It is their peculiar mission to keep alive among us the mystical flame with which not only St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila but also St Thérèse of Lisieux burned.

It is no easy job to explain to the ignorant that spiritual ardour is not the sinister combustion which they suspect it of being, or to announce to the learned that the spirit has the right to burn. Many people are horrified at the Carmelite Rule; others, after poking amongst the cinders, come to the conclusion that there is not much to it after all. It is difficult for those who see it from far away to recognise that the fire they have observed is in fact a *feu de joie*.

XI. DOMINICAN HOSPITALITY

THE Dominicans of Paris have twice asked me to eat with them: once at the Priory of La Glacière, and once in their house in the Faubourg St Honoré.

La Glacière gives an impression of poverty; this is suitable to a mendicant Order. Its old walls enclose a courtyard filled with dusty trees, and it reminds one of a dilapidated school, but in fact the house was formerly an infirmary. As one walks along the passages on to which the cells, oratories and common-rooms debouch, one rather expects to see doodles on the walls made by idle scholars. But the Dominicans are not idle, and they do not use their walls for scribbling. There is little evidence of art at La Glacière, except for the queer modern stained-glass windows which are remarkably opaque and suggest an early form of 'blackout'.



Dominicans' meals are governed by a ceremonial of great antiquity. At about half-past twelve the

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Reverend Fathers are summoned by a bell, and having washed their hands ceremonially and chanted the first part of the Grace in the cloister, they enter the refectory in double file. The Juniors take their place at the head of the procession and the Seniors at its tail, as it makes its way into the refectory. Long tables run down it at which each friar has his appointed place. Pulling their hoods over their faces, the Fathers sit down on one side of the table, their backs against the wall or the windows. The scene resembles a painting of the Last Supper. Complete silence reigns as they begin to eat their uninteresting food, which is of about the same quality as a school meal.

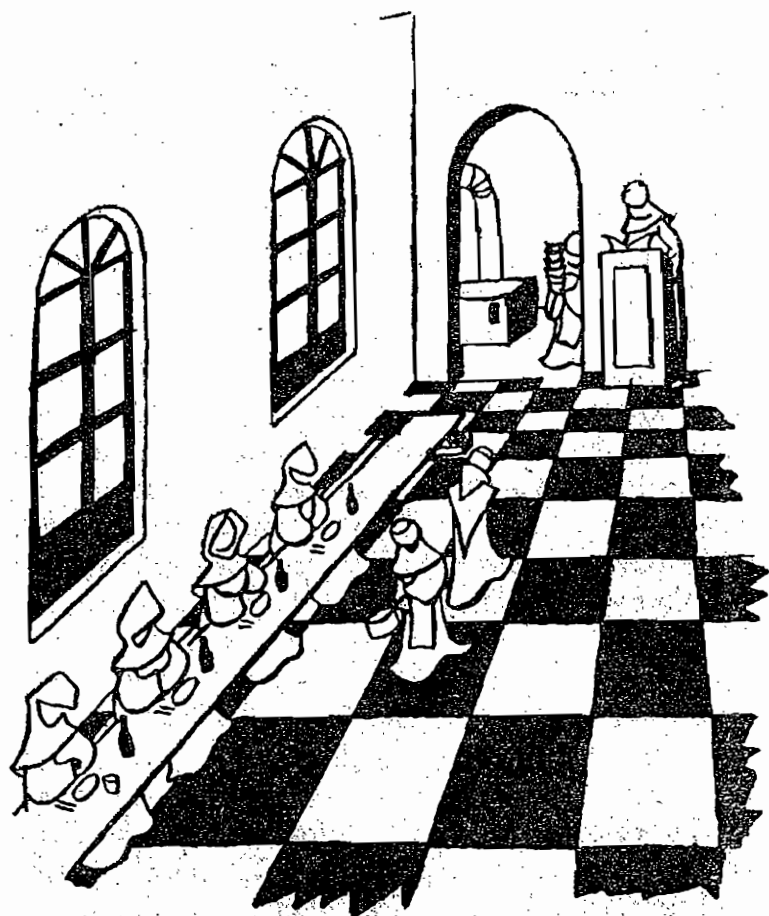
In most Dominican Houses the guest is honoured by being seated on the right of the Father Prior. He is mute but none the less attentive. (In Benedictine monasteries the Abbot pushes politeness to the point of himself washing the hands of his guests before they enter the refectory.)



The servers ply between the tables and the kitchen, alert and silent in a flurry of homespun. They see to it that no one lacks anything in a company in which no one has the right to make a

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request for himself—the law of charity, however, permits a friar to ask for anything which he observes that his neighbour may be in need of. A story is told of one who found a disagreeable beetle on his plate



and immediately called the server, remarking: 'My neighbour has no beetle in his soup.' The last lay brother is served first and the Prior after everyone else.

Although very ceremonial, Dominican meals do not include after-dinner speeches, but they are not completed in silence for at a given moment a lector gets into a pulpit and reads from some learned work.

When the meal is over the tables are formally swept, dishes cleared away and Grace chanted; usually the community then processes into the church, and afterwards to recreation, a break lasting half-an-hour during which there is general conversation and coffee is drunk.

I have only a vague recollection of the recreation at La Glacière. I recall that a Reverend Father discussed sculpture with great enthusiasm and invited me to look at a collection of photographs which proved his points. I think he had discovered that the Calvaries of the twelfth century were very akin to certain modern works of art.



The priory of the Faubourg Saint Honoré is more elegant than the Glacière. Its marble halls, its fine ironwork and delightful cloister, which was

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designed by a well-known architect and looks on to a pretty garden (which incidentally does not belong to the friars), give it considerable charm. A Dominican Father who was then working in the slums told me that he had his eye on it for a convalescent home, but for the moment it is a headquarters. Like all Houses of the Order, it reminds one of a cross between a *pension de famille* and a small Charter House.

The distinctive characteristic of the Friars of St Dominic is that they combine the active and the contemplative life, with all the liberty which the first requires and all the discipline which the latter entails.

Dominicans follow many professions; they may be preachers, professors, physicists or editors, but every evening they crowd into their priory where they practise the life of prayer. According to a dictum, 'their active life springs from the abundance of contemplation'. All through the day this overflowing measure of contemplation is poured out into hundreds of varied apostolic works, over which their Superior has a limited right of supervision. The sons of St Dominic are in a sense Carthusians who live in the world and are certainly the freest of all friars. One might even say that they are freer than any lay person, for they have chosen that true liberty which is based on renunciation.

Discussion among the Dominicans is highly

controversial, and during the recreation, the visiting writer, who may have thought he had come to ask questions, finds himself being interrogated. Five or six theologians armed to the teeth fall upon the wretched man, and he may well begin to wonder whether he has tumbled into the clutches of the Inquisition.

'You must realise,' a stocky Father remarked to me, 'that we Dominicans are not frightened of revolutions.' The Order, founded in 1210, came into being when the Albigensian heresy was at its height, and the Dominican way of life, that of preachers and mendicants, was itself something of a revolutionary concept. Perhaps for this reason the Dominicans, born in a period of strife and innovation, seem to take political convulsions and Marxist revolutions in their stride.



These friars remain extraordinarily individual in their outlook and interests, so that while one can speak of Dominican ideals, one cannot refer to a Dominican type. To get a true impression of the Order, which at any given time always contains a number of outstanding individuals, one is obliged to meet its members personally.

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While one Reverend Father may be typical of all that is most enlightened in his own country and engrossed in its movements, another may be entirely concerned with the world's economic problems of today or tomorrow, and a third may be searching for a fellow scholar with whom he can discuss the Mesopotamian dialect of the twelfth century B.C.

When, in 1941, the French Dominicans sent a young priest to work in the Marseilles docks, they were among the first to engage in the worker-priest movement. In discussing this Order it is useless to question whether men of action or scholars and contemplatives give it its character, for it sets out to be an Order in which both action and contemplation have their part, and if one type seems to predominate at a given moment, all one can deduce is that, after a while, the balance will be readjusted by the predominance of the other type.



Some historians predict that the monastic movement, having started with the contemplative Orders and then produced the mendicant friars and later the Jesuits, is likely in time to introduce Orders devoid of vows and tonsure and complete with wives and

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children. Their mistake lies in the fact that they do not realise that all these different kinds of vocation co-exist, without supplanting each other. The Dominicans are not competing for vocations with the Carthusians, or the Jesuits with the Dominicans. The newer Orders are an alternative, not a substitute for the older Orders. It is not a question of evolution, but of a greater richness.

XII. THE SCHOOL OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS

THE friars of St Dominic are leaders among the intelligentsia of the Church. They have the wisdom and the enquiring turn of mind of an intellectual *élite*, together with a deep concern with contemporary problems. This is allied to a tendency to push criticism in the field of thought and to withhold judgment.

The Dominicans, especially in France, are perhaps the most mentally enterprising of all religious. They produce innumerable books and a great number of important periodicals. The latter, in France alone, reach several million readers, and this scattering of the salt of the earth is achieved in papers which are as different in character as are the friars themselves.

In the intellectual field, this Order is also the one most concerned with probing modern developments in philosophy, psychology, and metaphysics.



But while all these investigators continue their work, St Thomas Aquinas remains the theological

Master of the eight thousand Dominicans; he is the greatest thinker which the Order has produced.

Thomism is still the most imposing creation of mediaeval thought and the work of its originator is still an inexhaustible mine for theological study; often with one majestic gesture his thought will wash our paltry controversies away.

Many enormous volumes were written by him, not to mention many minor works of the size of an average textbook. Each volume is informed by his splendid and serene intelligence, an intelligence always ready to give a charitable welcome to even the smallest truth which he may meet on his way, however ragged and dusty with errors it may appear.

In his great doctrinal work St Thomas sacrifices everything to achieve clarity and precision. The two hundred questions of the *Summa* are sub-divided into 'articles' and process before us in an immutable order: 'Objection', 'Solution', 'Replies', unhindered by any change in rhythm or by any lyrical digression. Their form is dictated by the fact that the Doctor is addressing himself to beginners, whom he has to lead step by step, taking care not to by-pass any difficulty or beg any question. In order to do this he had to impose the strictest discipline on his mind, and adopt a simple and direct method, whose fundamental integrity has never been equalled by any of his imitators.

But this is only one side of the Master's writing;

when he was ordered by the Pope to compose hymns for the Proper Office on the Feast of Corpus Christi, his verses were so beautiful that St Bonaventure, who had also been asked to submit his compositions, tore up his own poems before the eyes of the assembly of Cardinals, gathered together to judge the entries.



As a theologian St Thomas is often considered arid, but the man himself was both gentle and humble. His colleagues at the University of Paris, who did not hold these two virtues in much account, nicknamed him the 'Dumb Ox', because, owing to some illness, he was enormously fat and by nature extremely placid. Only twice in his life is he known to have lost his temper—once with a lady of the town who had been sent by his family to divert him from his vocation, and about twenty years later with the sophist David de Dinant, on purely metaphysical grounds. G. K. Chesterton, the most delightful of his biographers, describes how, on one occasion, a fellow student decided to help this 'dull-witted undergraduate' by giving him an explanation of the lectures he had attended that day. St Thomas listened humbly and patiently to the well-meaning interpreter but gave no sign of any intelligence, and only at the

point at which his coach confessed that he had got out of his depth did the pupil open his mouth and suggest a brilliant explanation of the problem. After this incident the 'Dumb Ox' was allowed to chew the cud in peace.

One of the principles of Thomist teaching is to listen to theories before making statements. St Thomas listened and remained silent, till the appropriate moment came. In this his adversaries rarely resemble him.



His power of concentration was so great that it often caused him to become the butt of his young colleagues. 'Brother Thomas, Brother Thomas, look out of the window—an ox is flying past!' The Saint, preoccupied with his thoughts, got up, to the joy of the merry-makers, and mechanically made his way to the window. Then he remarked dryly: 'I should prefer to believe that an ox can fly than that friars tell lies.' Thus proving that young gentlemen in search of amusement had better not try to compel Saints to come down from the seventh heaven in order to tease them.

It is easier to describe St Thomas than to give any précis of Thomism. Bergson regarded the philosophy of Aristotle and that of St Thomas as the natural

THE SCHOOL OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS

philosophy of the human mind. To historians, Thomism is the counterpart of a great cathedral, to professors of philosophy a sort of storehouse of commonsense. Some urbane people consider it the most important textbook on lifemanship, for by its aid it is possible to learn and appreciate the truths of life. Compilers of Digests, on the other hand, know St Thomas as the man who discovered the five proofs of the existence of God. These were conclusive and compelling to mediaeval minds but cannot exert the same effect on the minds of our contemporaries, since we know that compulsion is something which they reject with disgust. These five proofs are five paths of logic, all based on this text from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter I, Verse 20:

'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.'



Like St Paul, St Thomas was of the opinion that without the aid of faith man's reason could deduce the existence of God from His creation. His postulate is based on the profound conviction—which in his time was common ground between thinkers of all schools—that nature had something to impart to

human intelligence; today this opinion is not favoured by minds which are wrapped up in themselves. But so long as reason does not deny itself (this is not always so), St Thomas's five proofs remain irrefutable. They can stand up to any attack, and, if they are defined in terms which are those of philosophy, the most unlearned can arrive at the same conclusion by reading the text of St Paul. He was not solely concerned with scientific proofs of the existence of God, but also, as M. Jacques Maritain says in *Approches de Dieu*, with natural proofs; to this end 'the vision of created things leads each man's reason regardless of whether he is a philosopher or not'.

It is surely not necessary to be a philosopher in order to recognise order in the world and to believe that such an order is established by an intelligence. This leads us to the goal of St Thomas's fifth way, and brings us there in the company of Voltaire, Kant and Einstein, amongst others.



If there is one thing which can be proved by reason, it is the existence of God, and nowadays this is sometimes held as a reproach against it.

St Thomas is a very rare case, for he is a thinker

who enjoyed good health. His reason was reasonable, his heart loving, his eyes saw, his ears heard, he used his feet to walk with and not for scratching his ears. He did not regard his intelligence as a natural liar and was thereby spared the need to keep it in a police cell. To us this may seem almost abnormal, for today when an intelligence speaks to its owner it is quite often fallen upon and grilled in the hope of making it admit that it was intent on misleading him. St Thomas's senses transmitted their messages faithfully to him, and if on occasion one of them seemed dubious or incomplete, this did not cause him to order the postman to cease his calls.

He was not afflicted by the curious and prevalent disease of the understanding which attacks many modern thinkers and causes them to stand fixed in front of a mirror, muttering: 'I think . . . I think . . . I think . . .' in the vain hope that one day the reflection will answer triumphantly: 'Therefore you are. . . .'

St Thomas preferred to look out of the window, even though oxen were earthbound. He liked to converse with nature, since he regarded both nature and himself as children of the same Father. This capacity to talk with things has largely been lost, or perhaps it has been taken away from us because we are losing the means and the wish to understand each other.

St Thomas's thought never recognised any natural

enemy on earth or in the heavens; his approach was always friendly—this because there is enough good in all created beings to win the friendship of a mind which is at peace with itself.

Those who read the *Summa* will be surprised to see the number of pagan authors who turn out to be posthumous collaborators, each bringing his stone to the majestic theological masterpiece. Aristotle, interpreted by the Angelic Doctor, is as Christian as can be imagined, and it is delightful to see this greatest of pagan philosophers serving the Mass of the most noble of Catholic theologians. Thus St Thomas got some of his basic principles from a Greek; others he dug out from beneath the Pyramids, and he also included contributions from behind the Great Wall of China. Any word which seemed to hold an echo of the truth sent his mind travelling towards it, for he realised that the smallest speck of truth, held with integrity, must eventually witness to the whole truth: for the garment of truth is without seam.



One day when he was dining with St Louis, the King of France, St Thomas suddenly broke his habitual silence, and to the embarrassment of the courtiers, banged his fist on the table, exclaiming:

‘That will settle the Manicheans . . .’ Absorbed in his thoughts, he would levitate without noticing it, or go back seventeen centuries to look for a reference, just as he might have turned round to take a book from a nearby shelf. He never worried about his position in the minds of his contemporaries or in time or space. We seem to have lost this fine sense of eternity and are left with only a feeling for history, history which has become an idol not averse to human sacrifice. Today we wait for the Dominicans to strike the table with their fists and reveal the truth to us, for this is their real mission.

XIII. THE TRIAL OF THE JESUITS

IN 1610 the members of the French Parliament, having set themselves up as a self-appointed subsidiary of the Holy Inquisition, passed a decree stating that the Society of Jesus was: 'detestable, diabolical, a corruptor of youth and an enemy of the King and of the State'. At the time that this anathema was delivered by the Parliamentary theologians, the Society had existed for seventy years and the vigilance of the Church had failed to discover its satanic character.

Other condemnations were to follow. D'Alembert, writing in the Encyclopaedia, after remarking that no Order could pride itself on having had so many members who had gained fame in the arts and sciences, ended by stating that there were no crimes which this breed of clerk had not committed and no perverse doctrine which they had not taught.

Thus to the odour of sulphur the suggestion of crime was added.

Later on the historian Michelet weighed in to complete the portrait.

'The Jesuit technique has been active and powerful. But it has not created anything which has life in it. Not one *man* in three hundred years. What is the

character of a Jesuit? He has none. He can be used for any purpose, he is a machine. No—you do not belong to the past. No—you do not belong to the present. Do you exist? No—you appear to exist. If you insist, then I am prepared to allow that you are something, I will admit that you are an obsolete form of arms, a fireship of the time of Philip the Second of Spain.'

The thread of the argument has got a bit tangled, but the verdict is none the less clear.

These people whose names are famous in the arts and sciences are dyed in crimes (scientific and artistic crimes), and are corruptors of youth; nevertheless they are not even men but relics of the Invincible Armada. They do not belong to the past or to the present and should be struck from the list of human beings.

Luckily there are some mitigating circumstances, as the following evidence suggests:

'For seven years I lived with the Jesuits. What did I see? The most hardworking and frugal existence, every moment occupied either in looking after us or in the exercise of their austere profession. I am witness for the thousands of boys who like myself were educated by them. I am sure that not one can contradict what I have said.'¹

This certificate of good conduct complicates matters, and the identity of the witness will probably cause the Judge to decide that no case lies against the

¹Quoted by P. Doncoeur in *La Compagnie de Jésus*.

Society, for the affidavit is signed by François Marie Arouet, commonly known as Voltaire.



To ordinary mortals, who have not been corrupted by Jesuit education like the poor youngsters of 1610 (or filled with gratitude like Voltaire), the Jesuit and his Society are a triple mystery compact of ambition, power and humility.

This view of the Jesuits has been established once and for all by Alexandre Dumas¹ in his picture of Aramis—that musketeer of the monastery, Curate of the alcove and General of the Society of Jesus. Dumas' Aramis possesses unlimited power and a genius for intrigue, he revels in plots and disguises, being particularly addicted to the rôle of a beggar, which seems on occasions to set off his unlimited authority all the better. He has no fixed abode, and roams around weaving the web of his secret plots, until he is the only person who can find his way through the labyrinth of his machinations. The insignia of his office is a ring, whose mysterious setting has terrifying effects. The moment the confederate catches sight of this fearful jewel he trembles, his pupils dilate, his hair stands on end, the blood gradually

¹ *The Vicomte de Bragalone.*

THE TRIAL OF THE JESUITS

leaves his limbs, he pales and stiffens *perinde ac cadaver*, until he really resembles Michelet's portrait of a Jesuit: he is no longer of the past or of the present, he is no longer a man, he is reduced to a single congealed block of obedience. When the General appears the soldier dies.



I am sorry to observe that novelists are just as irresponsible as historians. Nor do philosophers seem to be more reasonable, for Pascal's eighteen *Lettres Provinciales* glitter as literature but do not shine with the truth of a documentary. Indeed, they give the Society a lesson in Jesuitry such as the Jesuits themselves have never delivered to any pupil. Joseph de Maistre was right when he called them M. Pascal's 'Eighteen Liars'.

Like all undertakings which seem beyond human capacity, the Society of Jesus arouses aversion and enthusiasm to an equal degree. The imagination gets excited and clouds true judgment. Today no one believes in the sinister crimes, which no accuser has ever defined, but, all the same, the real character of the Society, its means and its ends, remain enigmas. Is it simply one school of missionaries among many similar congregations? Is it just another religious Order? Or is it a secret army, an instrument of world

domination welded in the shadow of the Papacy, or can it be a political party? What are they after? Do they want to dominate the mind of youth and eventually to re-establish the temporal power of the Church? What motivates them? Ambition? Fanaticism? From whom do they take their orders? From the Pope, to whom they are bound by a special vow of obedience, or from the General of the Order?

The Society seems to hold its secret. Moralists who do not always demand proofs before passing sentence, and novelists who have nearly as much imagination as historians, have not got round to the fact that the secret of the Society of Jesus is clearly displayed for all to see in its motto:

‘Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.’



This Society, which is often represented as a sort of spiritual police, has as its founder a man who was several times had up before the Inquisition. This is unexpected.

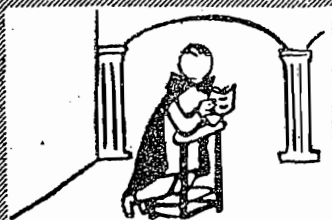
Don Inigo Onaz y Loyola was born in 1491 in the Spanish province of Guipuzcoa. At fifteen he went as a page to the Court of Castile, and at twenty he was a mercenary in the pay of the King of Navarre. For a time the young soldier presumably experienced

all the pleasures and amusements of his age and profession. Then when he was thirty, a French cannon-ball broke his leg during the siege of Pamplona, and afforded him six months' rest. This favoured meditation and resulted in the launching of a Saint at the expense of the army. Military courage was changed into apostolic heroism; the soldier turned clerk began to preach at street corners. We who find it bothersome to move from one office to another can only wonder at the Saints who seem to change from one kind of life to another with extraordinary ease. Indeed, St Ignatius changed much too quickly for the liking of the Inquisition, who hauled him up several times for preaching charity without having first learned his theology.

Saint Ignatius was ready to tackle anything; at thirty-five he became a student and began to learn grammar; at thirty-eight he started on theology and about this time he left Spain, where the visits of the Inquisition were becoming too frequent, and went to France whose skies were less clouded by excommunications.

He was forty-five when he was ordained; he then determined to inaugurate a religious Institute which would have a quasi-military character, be strongly hierarchic in structure and very far removed from the democratic way of life. The aim he set its members was that of combating Protestantism. They were bound by the usual vows of obedience, poverty and

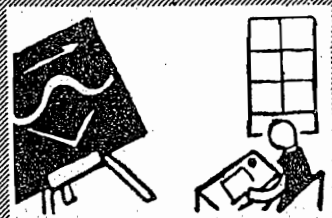
THE SALT OF THE EARTH



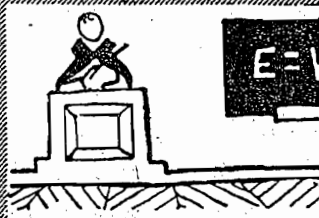
Novitiate, 2 years.



Juniorate (2 years). Simple vows, study of the classics.



Philosophy (3 years).



Teaching (3 years).



'Theologate' (4 years), study of theology. Ordination.



'Tertiaship' (another year's novitiate). Solemn vows, active work.

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chastity, but otherwise freed from monastic observances (for instance, they recite their Office privately and not in choir) and always ready for action at the behest of the Pope. These remain the basic principles of the Society of Jesus.

St Ignatius shared a garret in Paris with two other students, Pierre Favre and Don Francisco de Jassu. Of the two, the latter proved much harder to convert, but once convinced, there was no holding him. He sped like an arrow to Japan and is known to us as St Francis Xavier. Naturally the third member of the party also became a Saint, so that anti-clericals can well object that an Institute founded by three Saints, instead of following the normal precedent of having one founder Saint, must necessarily be rather *arriviste*.

The first Statutes devised by St Ignatius were approved by the Pope in 1540, and hardly had the three founders gathered some recruits around them than all Europe was talking about the new Institute, and while Canon Melchior was attracting thunderbolts in Spain, the University of Paris was setting gins.

From its inception the Society had a chequered career, but this did not disconcert the Jesuits, whose enthusiasm always seems to grow to the same measure as their difficulties.

At the time of the death of St Ignatius (1556), the Society numbered one thousand; by 1574 this figure had risen to 4,000; and by 1616 they were 13,000 and had established thirty-seven 'Provinces' comprising

400 houses. Today, despite persecution, suppression and expulsion, there are 30,000 Jesuits spread over the world. True to the spirit of their institution, they have exercised every kind of profession. These are listed in the book by P. Doncoeur from which I quoted earlier in this chapter. Surely never have birds of such variegated plumage flown out from so stark a dovecote. As schoolmasters the French Jesuits have counted the following celebrities among their pupils: Fleury, Berulle, Olier, Balzac, Descartes, Corneille, Montesquieu, Molière, Rousseau, Joseph de Maistre, Louvois, Colbert, Condé, and more recently Generals Foch and Lyautey.

As missionaries they reached India, crossed the Himalayas and buried themselves in China and in Japan, leaving in their wake here a Jesuit Brahmin, wearing a yellow robe and more soaked in Brahminism than the Brahmins themselves, there a Jesuit Yogi excelling all the local Yogis in ascetic practices.

A Jesuit at the Court of the Emperor of Japan became so learned in Japanese etiquette that he was always consulted on occasions of state; while in other parts of the Orient Jesuit snake-charmers were displaying their gift. There have been Jesuit horologists, geographers, astronomers, doctors and architects. A Jesuit discovered the source of the Mississippi, another first sailed up the Missouri to the Lakes. From the Philippines they brought us quinine and vanilla; both the magic lantern and the speaking tube were their

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inventions; the process of making china is due to one of them; another taught Westerners to use the umbrella.

And who do you imagine held the post of President of the Chinese Imperial Tribunal of Mathematics for longer than any other professor? A Jesuit.

They have been, are, and will be, whatever their mission requires of them. But besides this side of their activities they have also been beheaded, scalped, burnt, crucified, massacred in groups and tortured individually, on a scale exceeding that of the members of any other Order. They can certainly bring a magnificent array of martyrs to the tribunal of history. About a thousand of them have given witness in this fashion and the lists are still open, for the Jesuits, who are ready to follow any trade and to wear any costume, also very gladly take up the martyr's crown.



The best recipe for becoming a Jesuit is to be found in the textbook of the Society, 'The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius' (cf. *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola* by Joseph Rickaby, S.J., Burns & Oates Ltd.). It is a remarkably dispassionate treatise on mysticism, which leads the soul forward by a series of methodically arranged and minutely detailed

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meditations and deals with every possible aspect of the subject including the way in which to breathe and pray in unison. This is a form of spirituality which may appear rather mathematical, arid and calculating. The novice is urged to make notes of his faults at midday and again in the evening so that at any moment he is able to see where he stands, and as the week goes by, St Ignatius remarks, with his usual quiet assurance, the number of ticks will decrease, 'for naturally as time passes faults will diminish from day to day'. St Ignatius saw that the straight road is the shortest road to perfection, and held that a knowledge of good not only presupposes a will to good but also the means necessary to reach the goal. He defines the objective in a few lines, which are the basis of the exercise:

'Man was created to praise, do reverence to and serve God our Lord, and thereby to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and to help him in the following out of the end for which he was created. Hence it follows that man should make use of creatures so far as they do help him towards his end, and should withdraw from them so far as they are a hindrance to him in regard to that end. Wherefore it is necessary to make ourselves detached in regard of all created things,—in all that is left to the liberty of our free will, and is not forbidden it,—so that we on our part should not wish

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for health rather than sickness, for riches rather than poverty, for honour rather than ignominy, for a long life rather than a short life, and so in all other matters, solely desiring and choosing those things which may better lead us to the end for which we were created.'



It seems to me that after reading this passage the verdict is assured, and that this programme of progressive detachment decides the case in favour of the Jesuits. For it would be impossible for any human being to practise the Exercises of St Ignatius, during the fifteen years which it takes to make a Jesuit, unless he were possessed by a passion exceeding all human passions. Such renunciation cannot spring from unworthy motives, and the ambitions we despair of achieving in this world must already have been renounced at the moment in which the will becomes attached to a greater good and starts off like a bolt from a bow on its unswerving course towards the greater good.

Michelet may laugh, but the Jesuit technique forms men of outstanding character. The world may hate them but it cannot defeat them. They may be exiled, but have they not long since exiled themselves from

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their own will? It is hard to see what may still tempt them. They can stand up to anyone, as Marxists find when they discover that the Jesuits can beat them at dialectic; to those who persecute them they leave a blessing, and that after all is the only property they still possess.

XIV. THE MIRACLE OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

IF we are annoyed with contemplatives, because they contemplate, if the Jesuits irritate us because besides producing contemplatives they are also active in the world, we can always fall back on St Francis of Assisi.

His pure spirit was given the grace of arousing the homage alike of believers and unbelievers. He is a kind of anarchist beloved by orderly people, a Saint who appeals even to anti-clericals. Whether he is preaching like a Dominican, singing like a Benedictine, praying like a Cistercian, contemplating like a Carthusian, or setting the world on fire like a Jesuit, he still commands general approval. Hostility, caution, disagreement, disappear in his presence; his unconventional actions do not alarm the conventional, his improvidence is approved by the provident, his penances seem quite acceptable even to atheists.

He preached to the birds while his companions were occupying themselves with fishes, he begged his bread in the shadow of the rich paternal mansion, he asked for hospitality hoping it would be refused him and that he would be pushed back into the snow. He described all this as perfect happiness, and it seems

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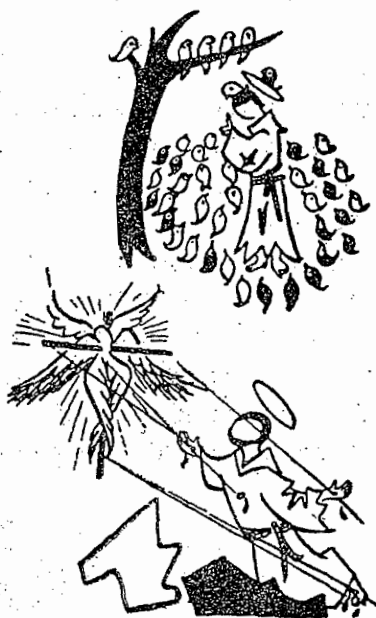
that everyone agrees with him. His biographers claim that he reconciled man to nature, but he did a lot more than this, for he reconciled the criminal to the police, the puritan to the poet, the bourgeois to the beggar, and also the poor to poverty. His greatest achievement lay not so much in discovering that Sister Water was related to him but in persuading the tenant of the third floor back that he had found a brother in the lodger on the next floor.

These are among the miracles which suggest that we must investigate the Friars of St Francis before we end our journey.



St Francis's life was the Gospel *lived* 'to the letter and without a gloss'. These are his own words, and they express his doctrine, his work, his achievement and himself. Indeed, he can be compared to the Gospels themselves. From the day in the year 1209 when he left his comfortable home, his acts became parables, and he offered to his astonished compatriots the peculiar spectacle of 'the good news' running wild. Dressed in sackcloth and bare-footed, he went off to preach in the streets, and however great his eloquence, it was certainly not due to this gift that within ten years five thousand disciples had

THE MIRACLE OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI



SAINT FRANCIS

Kissing the Leper. San Damians, the starting point.
 The first Monastery: a barn at Rivo Torto. Preaching to the birds.
 Saint Francis persuades the wolf of Gubbio to give up stealing.
 The Stigmata.

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gathered round him. What attracted them was something much rarer: the perfect union between the Master and the disciple, so complete a concord that the Truth could shine through the person of the pupil. Like all mystics (who are usually described as dreamers), St Francis discovered a Beauty to which no other beauty could hold a candle, a Being far more *real* and *concrete* than any which we creatures of the world call concrete realities. He loved so greatly that he was no longer sure that he had an identity and he certainly did not wish to possess one.

When the sanctity of the Poverello was consummated God wrote on his members the sign of our redemption.

Saint Francis of Assisi died in 1226, two years after he had received the Stigmata. This was the last chapter of the Gospel he had lived, in which suffering and joy were so intermingled as to be indistinguishable, just as they are in the New Testament, of which his life can be called a mediaeval interpretation.



The Franciscan Order is the largest of all Orders; at the present time it numbers 46,000 friars and nuns and over three million tertiaries. Some of the latter are religious, others lay people who take no vows.

THE MIRACLE OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Among famous people who have been tertiaries are St Louis of France, St Elizabeth of Hungary, Christopher Columbus, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Volta, Galvani, Ozanam.

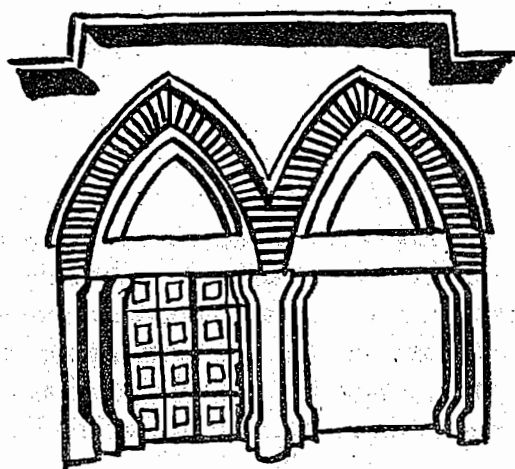
No doubt the lives of Franciscan Friars have changed a good deal since the days in which St Francis founded his little communities. He himself was not a priest. He thought that his companions had enough learning to put into practice his dictum of living the Gospel 'to the letter and without a gloss', but later the Church allowed them to enter the priesthood, so today they all learn theology. St Francis saw them so poor that they did not possess anything, individually or collectively; they were to be free as the birds. Today the birds live in Friaries. His life was one of improvisation, theirs is governed by a strict rule. But St Francis also wished them to be 'Little Brothers', the most humble and meekest of Friars, and in this his hope has been entirely fulfilled, for, after the passage of so many centuries, humility and gentleness remain characteristic of the Franciscan Order.

Teaching, preaching and missionary work are their main activities (also, for many years, they have had the honour of guarding the Holy Places); whatever they may be doing, their piety always has a touch of tenderness in it.

Today many Christians talk in terms of politics, statistics, progress, science and history, but few make

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verses and still fewer sing. It is a bad sign, for it signifies that to some extent Christianity is forgetting its own language. When this is so the little Brothers of St Francis are always there to remind us of the tongue, of the heart, of the Passion, and of our exile.



XV. CONCLUSION

EACH Religious Foundation has written its story in the history of the Church, in the history of the world, in the history of ideas. Not all these developments follow the same road, not all go at the same pace. People who are determined to keep up with fashion, even for the purpose of converting it, may well note this phenomenon.

No historian could hope to live long enough to write the history of all the Orders and Congregations.

Each honours its founder, and though we lavish ink and paper on recording the lives of war leaders and politicians, we should run short of both commodities if we were to try to tell completely the story of St Benedict and his Rule (which has lasted thirteen centuries), or that of St Ignatius, who had so strong a personality that after three hundred years the present members of the Society bear a closer resemblance to him than most children do to their own fathers.

Saints often retain the characteristics of their nation. The Spanish Saints and the Italian Saints are very true Spaniards and Italians, and it is easy to recognise the peculiar genius of their country in their characters, for was not Spain already arid when St John discovered the way of total renunciation; and

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Umbria already a countryside full of charm when St Francis began to sing of his Brother Tree and Sister Water?



Each foundation has its specific vocation, its special mission, its particular works. I have chosen to describe seven, because they seemed to represent main currents, but, in all, there are seventy-two Orders and Congregations without counting the ecclesiastical Institutions and Congregations composed of women. I have had to omit ancient spiritual families such as the Premonstratentians and young families such as the Little Brothers of Charles de Foucauld. Every body differs in some particular from other bodies, some differ widely. At no time have the active religious been more active, nor have the contemplatives seemed further removed from the world than today. While some religious movements are almost revolutionary in character, others recall the earliest years of the Church, some outposts are today engaged on the frontiers of Marxism, others are occupied with St Jerome. This double action of dilation and retraction, of the apostolate and the hermit's life, of missionary expansion and doctrinal steadfastness has always been the basic rhythm of the Church. It is comparable to the action of the heart.

CONCLUSION

No doubt it may be objected that I have described all monks, friars and clerks as perfect and all foundations as completely faithful to their ideal. Of course there are bad religious, but as a rule they do not remain in their community for very long. It would be quite impossible, for instance, to live in a monastery of contemplatives for several years without having a true vocation. In the solitude and silence of a Charter House, second-rate motives die from lack of incentive, or alternatively destroy their owner. One must admit, however, that human nature is very lively, very ingenious, and manages to recreate conditions of comfort for itself even in a shell-hole or in a prison. It reminds one of the long roots of a plant which manage to wriggle between the stones and seem to guess where they may find a scrap of earth. Given certain vegetable attributes, a hermit might manage to live not like an angel but like a cucumber. That is a professional risk. But the life of a cloistered cucumber is so far removed from comfort that one wonders whether even this degree of defeat is not a near victory?



To most of us a religious is a man who, by taking three vows corresponding to the three counsels of

perfection (now regarded as obsolete by most people), has solved the problem of his final accounting, while most of us no longer have time to consider such matters, being far too busy trying to deal with our monthly accounts. We are apt to forget that these vows to which in most cases are added the duties of the priesthood demand a great generosity of spirit, so great indeed that it is very rarely entirely effaced.

The Communities are not perfect societies. All, or nearly all, have at some period in their long history passed through times of weakness which we are apt to take as an excuse for our own shortcomings. But if they sometimes fall short of perfection, they are superior to secular societies in that the desire for perfection is the root of their existence and the only plausible explanation of their recoveries and survival.

That they have maintained a constant tendency towards their goal is suggested by the fact that with their restricted way of life and few contacts, they could not fall for long much below their ideals without becoming positively satanic in character. I shall not say that this has never happened, but certainly when it has, there have been plenty of people very ready to record the fact. No doubt if we entered a religious house we should recognise some of our own faults among its inmates, but since as matters stand we know relatively little about them it is more

CONCLUSION

interesting to discover the particulars in which they differ from us rather than those in which we are alike. It is for this reason that I have not written about the monk who fails.



Every Order has its own art, its style, its writers and its poets. This is already well known and I have not wished to stress the subject further, the more so because I know that there are too many people already who think that art is the only real justification for the spiritual life.



Every religious body has its own rhythm. The immobility of the contemplative is striking. But is it a real immobility? May it not be that it is similar to the apparent fixity of the planets which are nearest to the centre of gravity? For all the planets of the religious universe circle round the same sun, though at varying distances and at a varying pace.

From our point of observation we usually see only the side which is in shadow, the side of renunciation,

self-abnegation, and death. We cannot see the other side, the one which is turned towards the sun and is filled with brightness and light. I have brought back a few souvenirs from my trip to the country of the religious, but by now I hope that the reader who has been my companion has realised that I only touched the coasts. I have said nothing about the strange force which informs this universe, which attracts and disciplines the souls and the muscles, which convinces certain men that fasting and silence and life lived between four walls is a good thing. Or of how the knowledge comes to the individual that in making himself a hostage for life lies the way of his perfection. I have not spoken of the secret presence which fills the Carthusian cells and makes it possible to say that a Carthusian is a man who leaves human society in order to be less lonely. I have not spoken of the unknown joy for which all other joys are renounced, or of the invisible beauty which holds the soul in perpetual contemplation. I have said not one word about this mystery, this force, this beauty, and yet, of course, my book is not concerned with anything else.

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Appendix

There are different categories of societies of men and women bound by the vows of religion. According to Canon Law they are thus classified:

- (1) *Religious Orders*, whose members take solemn vows. These include Canons Regular, Monks, Friars, Clerks-Regular and all Nuns who have the privilege of solemn vows. Canons Regular have as first aim: The 'cultus'. Monks have as first aim: Sanctificatio propria. The aim of the Friars is: Sanctificatio propria et aliorum.
- (2) *Religious Congregations*, whose members take simple vows. These include most societies of men and women which have been founded since the Council of Trent.

Canons Regular are priests bound by solemn vows who normally live in community under a rule.

Monks are members of a particular community bound to live a common life under a Rule. What distinguishes them from Canons Regular is that they are not necessarily priests.

Friars are members of corporate bodies with centralised authority; it is in this respect that they differ from the majority of monks who belong, first of all, to their own monasteries and only in a lesser degree to the Congregation or Order as a whole.

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Before the Council of Trent it was not usual for Friars to hold property even in common and, in a less rigid sense, they are still mendicants.

Clerks-Regular are priests living in common under a Rule but not bound to the public celebration of the Divine Office.

Of the seven Orders examined in this book, the Benedictines, Cistercians and Carthusians are Monks. The Carmelites, Dominicans and Franciscans are Friars. The Jesuits are Clerks-Regular.

BENEDICTINES

THE Benedictine communities of men which do not form part of the Solesmes Congregation combine active with contemplative life, being engaged in various forms of pastoral and missionary work or education.

The first Benedictine monastery was founded by St Benedict at Subiaco, near Rome, towards the middle of the sixth century. The Benedictines were the apostles of England, Friesland, Germany, Scandinavia, Hungary and the Western Slavs. They became the chief pioneers of education and culture throughout Europe. Benedictine monasticism was introduced into England by St Augustine in 597. Nearly two hundred houses in England, twelve in Scotland, and five in Ireland were suppressed at the Reformation. Throughout the Penal Times Benedictines laboured for the re-conversion of England.

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Nine suffered martyrdom and eleven died in prison.

Today the Order of St Benedict consists of:

(a) *Confederated Benedictines*, i.e. fourteen Congregations, with about 190 abbeys and priories, and 11,100 monks, including lay brothers. Each monastery is practically an independent unit, although bound by the Constitutions of the Congregation to which it belongs. The Abbot Primate, who resides in Rome, has little actual jurisdiction over individual houses.

(b) *Independent branches* (Camaldolesi, Olivetans, Sylvestrians and Vallombrosians). Each group has its own President or General. The total number of monks making up these independent branches is about 500. Most Benedictines wear black, but some white or dark blue habits.

At the present time the following Congregations have houses in Great Britain:

(1) *English Congregation*. It has unbroken continuity with the pre-Reformation congregation, established in 1215, and re-erected in 1633. Belonging to it are the Abbeys of Downside (1606), Ampleforth (1608), Douai, Woolhampton (1615), Fort Augustus (1876), and Belmont (1859); also the Priors of Ealing (1899), Worth (1934), and North Berwick (1945). All the above houses have schools attached to them. The monks also engage in parish work in several dioceses.

- (2) *Congregation of Solesmes* (established 1837). Quarr Abbey, Isle of Wight, originally a house of refuge for the exiled community of Solesmes, established in 1907, is now developing into an English community. The monks devote themselves to intellectual work, and are famous for their rendering of liturgical music. (Solesmes was responsible for the official revision of plain-chant.)
- (3) *Cassinense Congregation of the Primitive Observance* (established 1872). The English Province of this international Congregation consists of the Abbeys of Ramsgate (1861), Buckfast (1882), and Prinknash (1928). The monks of Ramsgate have charge of all the parishes on the Isle of Thanet. They also conduct a preparatory school at Hemingford Grey, Huntingdonshire. The Buckfast Benedictines, while prepared to undertake occasional pastoral work, are mainly occupied within their monastery. The monks of Prinknash, who were established as an Anglican community in 1896 (the majority of whose members were received into the Catholic Church on Caldey Island in 1913), do no external work. They devote themselves to manual labour, and numerous kinds of arts and crafts. Dependent on Prinknash Abbey are the daughter houses of Farnborough, Hampshire (1947), and Pluscarden, Morayshire (1948). The Prinknash monks wear white habits.

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- (4) *Congregation of St Ottilien* (established in 1884). This exclusively foreign missionary Congregation of German origin has a house in England (St Augustine's, Hendon, London, N.4) which serves as liaison between the monks in Europe and the missionaries, many of whom work in British territories.
- (5) *Olivetans*. This independent branch of the Benedictine family, founded in 1313, whose Abbot-General is the Abbot of Monte Oliveto in Italy, established the Priory of Christ the King, Cockfosters, London, N.14, in 1930. The monks are mainly engaged in parish work.

In Ireland the Benedictines are represented by one community—St Columba's Priory, Glenstal, Co. Limerick, founded from Maredsous Abbey in 1927. It belongs to the *Belgian Congregation*. A school is attached to the priory.

Benedictines are very numerous in the United States, and include the following groups:

- (1) *American Cassinese Congregation* (established in 1855), with twenty-eight abbeys and priories, and nearly 1,900 monks and lay brothers. They engage in educational, pastoral, and missionary work. The first foundation was St Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pennsylvania (1846).
- (2) *Swiss American Congregation* (established in 1870). The apostolate carried on by these monks is

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similar to the above. They have about ten abbeys and priories, and number about 800 religious. The first monastery to be founded was St Meinrad's Archabbey, St Meinrad, Indiana (1854).

- (3) *English Congregation*. At St Anselm's Priory, Washington, D.C., and St Gregory's Priory, Providence, Rhode Island, there are communities mainly engaged in educational work.

The French Benedictines of Solesmes have one monastery at Saint Benoit-sur-Lac, Quebec Province, Canada (1912). The Congregation of St Ottilien has a priory at Newton, New Jersey and a mission house at Schuyler, Nebraska.

Benedictines belonging to the Belgian Province of the Cassinese Congregation of the Primitive Observance devote themselves to missionary work in the Transvaal. There is only one Benedictine community in Australia—the Abbey of New Nursia, Western Australia, founded in 1847. It forms part of the Spanish Province of this same Congregation. Monks of the American Cassinese Congregation engage in educational and missionary work in the Bahamas.

CISTERCIANS

THE Cistercian Order originated in 1098 at Cîteaux in Burgundy, when St Robert and twenty-one monks left their monastery of Molesme with the

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object of observing the Rule of St Benedict in its primitive form. Within about fifty years so many foundations had been made that it became necessary to form these communities into a new Order to ensure uniformity of observance. One of the earliest foundations was Clairvaux, of which St Bernard became Abbot.

The Cistercian Order spread quickly over Europe. Its members were practical farmers and pioneers of scientific agriculture. They started the wool industry, worked coal, iron and lead mines, mills and foundries, and engaged occasionally in foreign trade. They were also scholars, and were famous for their hospitality to the poor. The first Cistercian monastery in England was Waverley, founded in 1128. Seventy-seven communities in England, thirty-six in Ireland, and eleven in Scotland were suppressed at the Reformation.

The first fervour declined by the later Middle Ages. Several reform movements took place during the sixteenth century and onwards, the most famous being that instituted by the Abbé de Rancé at La Trappe. In 1664 the Order was divided into two branches, the Reformed and the Unreformed. The former became known as Trappists. In 1894 several groups of reformed monasteries were re-united into one body by Leo XIII and given new Constitutions. Today the Cistercian Order consists of two independent branches:

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- (1) *Cistercians of the Common Observance* (O.Cist.). They are composed of about eight Congregations, and number about 1,600 religious. The Abbot General resides in Rome. This branch of the Order has no houses in Great Britain and Ireland but it is represented in North America. There are also two independent groups of unreformed Cistercians. Their monasteries are mostly situated in France and Italy.
- (2) *Cistercians of the More Strict Observance* (O.C.R.). Since these monks follow the primitive observances of Cîteaux, the colloquial name of 'Trappists' is no longer properly applicable to them. They have about sixty monasteries in all parts of the world, with more than 3,400 religious, including lay brothers. The Abbot General, with the title of Cîteaux, resides in Rome.

In Great Britain there are monasteries at Mount St Bernard's Abbey, Leicestershire (1844); Caldey Island, South Wales (1928); and Sancta Maria Abbey, Nunraw, Scotland (1946). The three Irish Cistercian abbeys are Mount Mellaray, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford (1833); Mount St Joseph, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary (1878); and New Mellifont, near Drogheda (1939).

In recent years the reformed Cistercians have become very numerous in the United States. Several

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foundations have been made from the Abbey of Gethsemane, Kentucky (1848), including those in Huntsville, Utah and Conyers, Georgia. Another early monastery is New Melleray in Iowa (1849). There are four so-called 'Trappist' abbeys in Canada, the first of which was founded in Nova Scotia in 1825.

Except for a few minor differences, the manner of life of the Cistercians of the More Strict Observance is more or less the same in all parts of the world. The day is taken up with manual labour and study, with about five to six hours devoted to the celebration of the Divine Office and Masses. Only necessary conversation on business or spiritual matters is permitted. There is no provision for 'recreation' as in other Orders. Except at the two Irish monasteries of Mount Melleray and Roscrea, no active work, such as teaching in schools or colleges, is carried on.

The normal time-table is as follows:—

- 2.00 a.m. Matins and Lauds of Our Lady, followed by half-an-hour of private prayer and Matins and Lauds of the day, then private Masses.
- 5.30 a.m. Prime and Chapter of Faults; breakfast, then spiritual reading, and High Mass. (N.B.—The Little Office of Our Lady is always recited before the Divine Office at all Hours.)

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- 11.15 a.m. Dinner, following Sext and Nones. In summer the monks are allowed an hour's 'siesta'. The afternoon, like most of the morning, is given over to manual labour.
- 4.30 p.m. Vespers, followed by private prayer, and (about) supper (known as 'collation'). About half-an-hour after supper there is spiritual reading in the Chapter House. The day ends with Compline and the solemn singing of the *Salve Regina*.

CARTHUSIANS (O. CART.)

THE Carthusian Order had its origin in a group of hermits, established by St Bruno, formerly a Canon and Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Cologne, in 1084. He and his disciples retired to a remote spot in the high mountains near Grenoble in France. From the original monastery of La Grande Chartreuse this new Order gradually spread over Europe. The first Carthusian 'Customs', or Constitutions, were not drawn up until 1127, more than a quarter of a century after the death of St Bruno. Carthusian life is a combination of Benedictine monasticism with the eremitical life of early Christian times. Although the Constitutions have been revised more than once, the only main differences between the life of twelfth- and twentieth-century

Carthusians are a daily conventual Mass, a decrease in the strict fasts on bread and water, extra prayers, such as the offices for the dead, and the abolition of a midday rest in some countries.

Eight 'Charterhouses' were founded in England between 1154 and 1535, and one in Scotland, established in 1429. There was never more than one Carthusian monastery in Ireland. All these houses were suppressed at the Reformation. Eighteen monks were martyred, and beatified by Leo XIII. A few managed to escape abroad, and an English Charterhouse existed at Nieuport in Flanders from 1626 until 1783. Today the Carthusian Order numbers about 600 professed monks, including '*donati*' or lay brothers. There are not more than twenty monasteries in the whole world, and all of them are in Europe. The Prior of the Grande Chartreuse is always the Minister General of the Order. The choir monks occupy separate houses, built around a cloister. The lay brothers lead a less solitary life and merely have separate rooms or cells. Except on Sundays and greater feasts, meals are eaten in solitude. The food and drink is brought to each house or cell by lay brothers and passed through a hatch. Flesh meat is strictly forbidden. There is a continuous fast from September till Easter. During this period only one full meal is allowed. Recreation is taken in common on Sundays and festivals. Once a week there is a walk outside the monastic enclosure,

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obligatory on all monks except the sick and the aged. The habit of the choir monks is made of heavy white wool. The lay brothers wear brown or white habits according to their particular status.

There is only one Carthusian monastery in Great Britain—St Hugh's Charterhouse, Partridge Green, near Horsham, Sussex. It was completed in 1883 and is one of the largest monasteries in the world. A Carthusian monastery has been established in the United States at Whitingham, Vermont.

The normal Carthusian day is as follows:

10.30 or Matins and Lauds of Our Lady recited
11.00 p.m. in private.

11.15 or Matins and Lauds of the day and Lauds
11.45 p.m. of the Dead in Church, followed by the
 Prime of Our Lady and the recitation of
 a 'Dry Mass' in the monk's oratory.

5.45 a.m. Prime of the day and Terce of Our Lady
 said privately.

7.00 a.m. Litanies of the Saints in church, followed
 by conventual Mass, then private Masses.
 Study or manual labour fill up the rest
 of the time until dinner, which varies
 from 10 a.m. until midday. Sext and
 Nones are recited privately.

2.45 p.m. Vespers of Our Lady in the oratory, then
 Vespers of the day in church, followed
 usually by Vespers and Matins of the
 Dead.

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- 4.30 p.m. Light supper (in summer months only),
followed by spiritual reading.
6.00 p.m. Compline of the day and of Our Lady,
recited in private.
7.00 p.m. Bed.

The lay brothers have their own Office, made up of *Patens* and *Aves*. They assist at High Mass and Vespers on Sundays and feast days, and always at the first part of the long Night Office. They are occupied in various forms of manual work, according to the capacity of the individual. The choir monks confine their manual labour to what can be done within the enclosure of their little houses, e.g. gardening. Although these monks lead a solitary life, they are under strict obedience and have to conform to a time-table, which specifies when the individual is to occupy himself in reading, writing, the recitation of Offices, mental prayer and manual labour. The Carthusian Order has a rite of its own for the celebration of Mass, which to all intents and purposes is the Lyons rite of the eleventh century. As layfolk (never women) are not usually allowed into a Carthusian church, except to a separate chapel outside the enclosure, there is not much chance of their being puzzled by the many unfamiliar details of worship.

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CARMELITES

THE Order of the Brethren of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, which is the full title, evolved out of a group of hermits living on Mount Carmel in the first Christian times. They were given a Rule by the Patriarch of Jerusalem in 1212. Soon after this other eremitical communities were established in Palestine, but their members were either killed by the Saracens or managed to escape to Europe. Carmelite houses were established in several countries, and in 1247 St Simon Stock held a General Chapter at Aylesford, Kent. A new Rule had received Papal approbation in 1226. Eventually, the eremitical life was largely given up, and the Carmelites became one of the mendicant Orders, devoting themselves to preaching and teaching in the universities. Twenty-two Carmelite friaries in England, twelve in Scotland, and twenty-five in Ireland were suppressed at the Reformation.

As the result of several reform movements which started early in the fifteenth century, the most important of which was that instituted by St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, the Order was divided in 1593 into two branches, the *Calced* and *Discalced*. Today there is little difference in their spirit and observances. Both branches combine preaching, teaching and missionary work among their external activities, although ever mindful of

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the original ideal of the contemplative life. The habit is a brown tunic, scapular and hood, and a white woollen cloak. The Calced friars wear shoes, the Discalced sandals.

- (1) *Carmelites of the Old Observance* (O.Carm.). This branch of the Order now has about 2,200 professed members, under the jurisdiction of a Prior General resident in Rome, and houses in many parts of the world. The Irish Province, officially restored in 1737, has seven houses. The seven friaries situated in England and Wales are now subject to a Commissary General. In 1949 the Calced Carmelites regained possession of Aylesford Priory, Kent, the first house of the Order in England, which is in process of being restored. There are two Provinces in the United States and another in Australia, with numerous friaries.
- (2) *Discalced Carmelites* (O.C.D.). This more numerous branch, with about 3,400 professed members, has houses in most European countries, and in Asia, North and South America and the Near East. An Irish Province was established in 1638. Today it has four houses in Ireland, three in England, and others in Australia and California. There are five Provinces in the United States.

The daily life of Carmelite friars varies in the different countries, but wherever a community is large enough and local conditions make it possible,

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Matins and Lauds are recited at midnight. At least two hours daily are devoted to mental prayer. Normally there is perpetual abstinence from flesh meat. According to the Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites there should be at least one 'desert' house in each Province, to enable a limited number of friars to lead a purely contemplative life in solitude.

DOMINICANS (O.P.)

THE Order of Friars Preachers (Black Friars), founded by St Dominic in 1215, began as a small group of diocesan missionaries in the South of France, originally to combat the Albigensian heresy. The elaborate Constitutions of the new Order, which received Papal approval in 1217, declare that its purpose is 'principally and essentially for preaching and teaching, in order thereby to communicate to others the fruits of contemplation, and to procure the salvation of souls'. For more than seven hundred years the Dominicans have remained faithful to this ideal of combining the contemplative with the active life. The celebration of the Divine Office in choir is the basis of all other work, such as preaching, teaching, and missionary apostolate.

The Order spread rapidly all over Europe, and sent missionaries to Persia and India as well as the Near East. In the sixteenth century its sphere of

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apostolate was extended to North, South and Central America, then to Africa and the most distant parts of Asia. Today there are about 8,500 professed Dominicans, belonging to more than thirty provinces, ruled over by a Master General resident in Rome.

The English Province was founded in 1221, with its first house at Oxford. Fifty-eight priories in England and fifteen in Scotland were suppressed at the Reformation. The Province was revived by Cardinal Philip Howard in 1685. Today it numbers twelve houses in Great Britain, two of which have schools. The Province also has charge of missions in Grenada, British West Indies, and in South Africa.

The Dominicans found their way from England to Ireland in 1224. An Irish Province was erected in 1536, and continued to function after most of the priories had been suppressed at the Reformation. The establishment of houses abroad enabled Irish friars to continue working as missionaries in their own country throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many of them suffered martyrdom; others were imprisoned or banished for life. At the present time there are thirteen Dominican houses in Ireland.

It was the Irish Province which was mainly responsible for the introduction of the Friars Preachers into the United States. The first parish

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priest in New York was an Irish Dominican; the first two bishops of that See were also members of the Irish Province. Today there are three Provinces in the United States, and another for the Philippines. The Dominican priories in Australia were also founded from Ireland.

The daily life of the Friars Preachers varies considerably according to the size of the community and the nature of the work undertaken, but even where the Fathers have charge of parishes, the Divine Office is always recited in choir. The habit consists of a tunic, scapular, cape and hood, all of white wool, together with a leather belt, rosary, white stockings and black cloak. The latter is worn when preaching. The lay brothers have the same habit, but the scapular, cape and hood are black.

JESUITS (S.J.)

SOON after its foundation in 1534 the Society spread all over the world; suppressed in 1773, it was restored by Pius VII in 1814; today it has forty-four Provinces (including one each for Great Britain and Ireland, two for Canada and eight in the United States) and six Vice Provinces, and numbers some 27,000 religious. These are made up of (a) Novices, (b) Scholastics and Lay Brothers under simple vows (the former remain in this class from two to fifteen years, then make a third year's novitiate

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and are ordained priests; (c) Formed Coadjutors (Priests and Lay Brothers) all under simple vows; and (d) the Professed—all priests who have taken the special vow of obedience to the Pope in addition to the three solemn vows of religion; about 12,000 are in this class. The training is the longest of any Order. Jesuits are engaged in practically every type of apostolic work—preaching, giving missions and retreats, parish work, teaching, writing books, publishing periodicals, foreign missions, etc. Their activities have been so varied and widespread that it is impossible to attempt a summary.

The Society has always played an important part in the Catholic life of Great Britain. St Ignatius himself visited England from Paris and later sent his companions as missionaries. Fifty-seven Jesuits were martyred. English Jesuits took charge of the English College, Rome, and of the Seminaries of Valladolid, St Omer and Louvain. The English Province was erected in 1623. After the restoration of the Society in 1814 it revived and grew rapidly; today it has schools at Stonyhurst (originally founded at St Omer in 1592), Mount St Mary (Derbyshire), Beaumont (Old Windsor), Glasgow, Wimbledon, Stamford Hill and Leeds; a house in London; a novitiate at Harlaxton, Lincolnshire; three study houses (Campion House, Oxford; Heythrop College, Oxon., and St Beuno's College, Flints.); and

a study house for late vocations at Osterley; it has also charge of three retreat houses and of a number of churches, and of foreign missions in British Guiana.

Jesuits took an equally important part in the Catholic life of Ireland in Penal Times. The first missionaries came to Ulster in 1542; several were martyred between 1575 and 1649. Irish Jesuits went as missionaries to Guiana, Martinique and Paraguay. It took time for the Irish Province to recover after the restoration of the Society; today it has eleven houses in Ireland (including five schools) and staffs several missions in China. For many years it had charge of many missions and colleges in Australia; today there are sixteen Jesuit communities with over 200 members belonging to the Australian Province.

The habit varies according to the country; in most European countries it is black with sash and biretta similar to the dress of the secular clergy; in England and Ireland Jesuits dress like the secular clergy but have adopted a special form of black gown with wings on the shoulders.

In the U.S.A. the Jesuits have eight provinces: Maryland, N.Y.; Missouri; New Orleans; California; New England; Chicago; Oregon; New Mexico.

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FRANCISCANS

THE Franciscan Friars, otherwise known as the First Order of St Francis or Friars Minor, were founded in 1209, when Pope Honorius III gave verbal sanction to the original Rule drawn up by St Francis of Assisi. When the Rule was revised in 1223 it stated that the Brothers were 'to live in obedience and chastity, and without property, and to follow the doctrine and footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ'. Great stress was laid upon absolute poverty, likewise obedience and reverence to 'our Lord Pope Innocent and his successors'. The essentials of this new form of the religious life were a literal imitation of Christ, a spirit of prayer, and an all-embracing apostolate. The Rule came first—not the Order. This is the reason why the Order, which spread over Europe during the Middle Ages, is now divided into three independent families.

The Friars Minor found their way to Palestine, North Africa, Persia and India. They were the first apostles of the New World on the other side of the Atlantic after the discovery of North America at the close of the fifteenth century. They came to England in 1223, and then made foundations in Scotland and Ireland.

From almost the foundation of the First Order of St Francis there were disagreements as to the nature of poverty to be observed, and how far learning

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was to be pursued by the brethren. Some were prepared to accept dispensations from the original Rule granted by successive Popes, others wanted to maintain the primitive simplicity of life. By 1514 the so-called 'Observant' Friars had been constituted a virtually independent body within the Order. They were granted complete independence in 1517 when they became known as Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. By the following century there were several sub-divisions, each striving after a stricter interpretation of the Rule, which seemed to be wanting in the main body. In 1528 one of the groups of reformed Franciscans was separated from the Order by Pope Clement VII, and became known as Friars Minor Capuchin.

(1) *Friars Minor (of the Regular Observance)* (O.F.M.). This is by far the largest group of the First Order of St Francis. It consists of a union of four reformed branches of the First Order effected by Pope Leo XIII in 1897. It is ruled over by a Minister General, residing in Rome, and numbers about 25,000 professed members, with about a hundred Provinces.

The present English Province, which can claim continuity with the six English and nine Scottish pre-Reformation Observant communities, the first of which was established in 1447, was re-erected in 1891. It had been restored at Douai in France in 1629, but died out about 1838. During the seven-

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teenth and eighteenth centuries the Observant Franciscans continued to engage in missionary work in England, often in peril of their lives. About 1860 some Belgian friars came to England. Gorton, Manchester, was the first of many subsequent foundations. After 1880 other friaries were established by exiled Observants from France. Today the English Province has fourteen houses in England and four in Scotland. Some of its members do missionary work in India.

The Observant Franciscans made their first Irish foundation in the fifteenth century. Their communities were disbanded at the Reformation, but several colleges were opened abroad. Here were trained friars who returned to Ireland and kept the faith alive at the risk of penal laws. Some of the pioneer priests and bishops in Australia and Newfoundland were Irish Friars Minor. Today the very flourishing Irish Province consists of some fifteen houses, also St Isidore's College, Rome.

There are several very numerous Provinces in the United States and Canada, where the friars devote themselves to teaching in schools, colleges and seminaries, as well as to pastoral and missionary work. The Order is represented in many dioceses.

(2) *Friars Minor Conventual* (O.F.M.Conv.). This family of Friars Minor can be compared to the original trunk of the Franciscan tree from which all subsequent branches have sprung. It corresponds

with the mediaeval 'Friars of the Community', who accepted Papal dispensations from the original Rule of absolute poverty. It was this group of friars that became famous in the European universities during the Middle Ages. About sixty of their houses in England, Wales and Scotland were suppressed at the Reformation, also about thirty in Ireland. As has been stated already, they became an independent body with their own Minister General in 1517. During the eighteenth century their habit was changed from grey to black. Their Constitutions allow them to use boots or shoes for normal footwear instead of sandals.

The total number of professed members is about 3,650. They are to be found in more than twenty countries in all continents. Most of the older historic Franciscan shrines in Italy are in the possession of the Conventuals.

It was not until 1908 that they returned to England, where today there are four houses, with another in Wales, under the jurisdiction of a Commissary General, who has his headquarters in Liverpool. There are four Conventual Provinces in the United States, the first having been founded in 1852.

(3) *Friars Minor Capuchin* (O.F.M.Cap.). The first members of this group of reformed Franciscans, which came into being between 1525 and 1528, maintained that prayer was more important than

preaching. They retired to hermitages far away from towns and cities in Italy. But it was not long before they took up mission work at home and abroad. Within little more than a hundred years the Capuchins were to be found in almost every country of Europe, and in other continents. It is largely due to them that the Faith was preserved in Switzerland, Germany and Flanders. In the realm of literature the Capuchins were the leaders of the post-Reformation Catholic Humanist school of writers.

Today the Order numbers about 14,000 professed members, and is divided into forty-five Provinces.

The first Capuchins came to England early in the seventeenth century. Members of the Anglo-Irish Province, which had its headquarters abroad, did heroic mission work in England, Scotland and Ireland throughout the Penal Times. The second Capuchin mission in England dates from 1850, when some Italian friars arrived. Their first permanent house was at Peckham, London. Two years later a Belgian community settled at Pantasaph, North Wales. In 1873 a new English Province was erected. At the present time the Capuchins have ten houses in England and one in Scotland.

The Irish Province, re-established in 1885, dates from the arrival of the first friars about 1608. They were very active as missionaries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and had several colleges abroad. Today it consists of seven houses.

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The Irish friars also work as missionaries in Northern Rhodesia, and in the Cape Province of South Africa. The Province is also represented in several dioceses of the United States. The first of the two North American Provinces was erected in 1857.

Capuchins can be distinguished from other Friars Minor by the shape of their habit, which resembles that worn by the first Franciscans. They also wear beards. Except for minor details imposed by their respective Constitutions there is no vital difference in the manner of life of these three branches of the First Order of St Francis. Their spirit is virtually the same.

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